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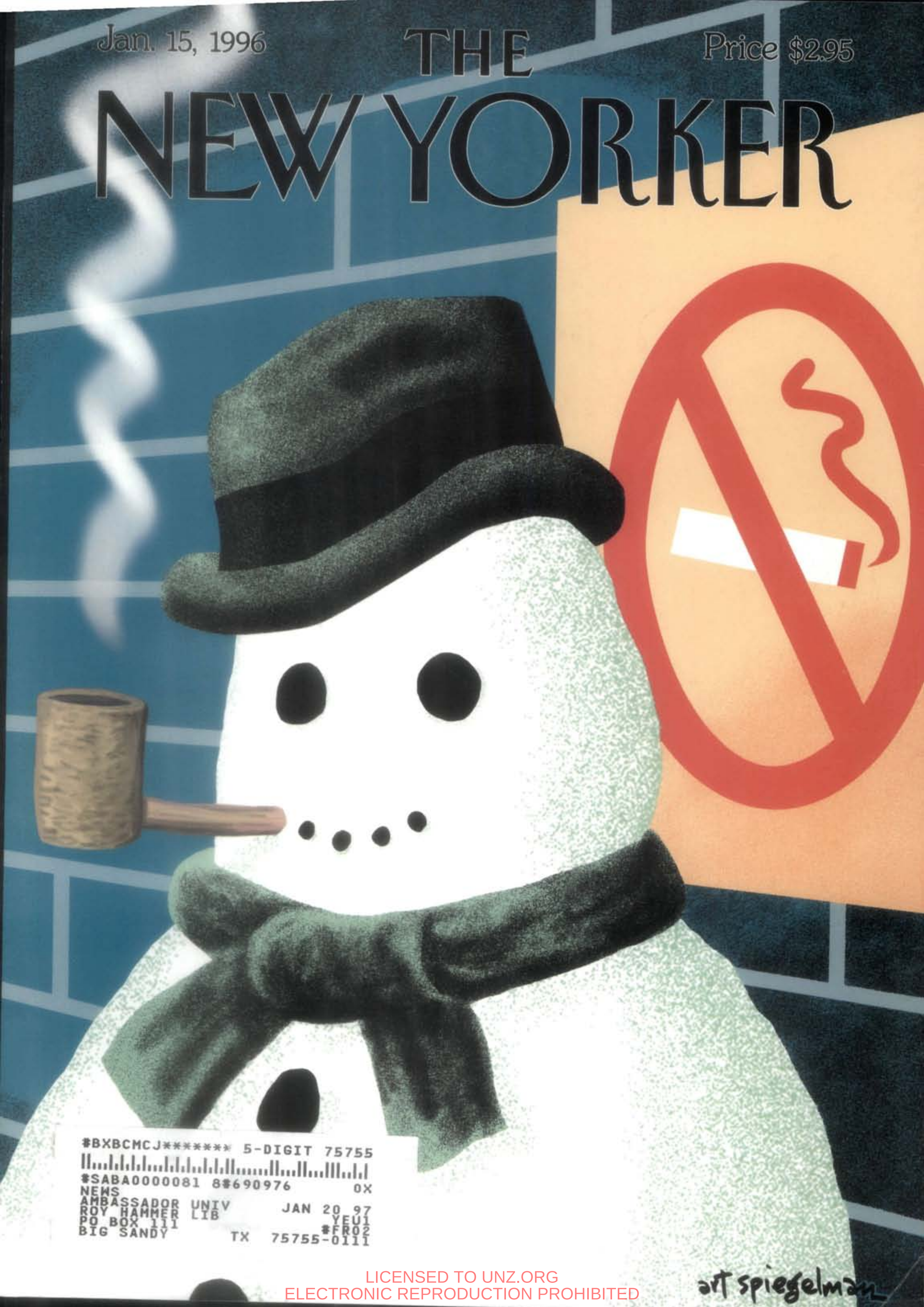

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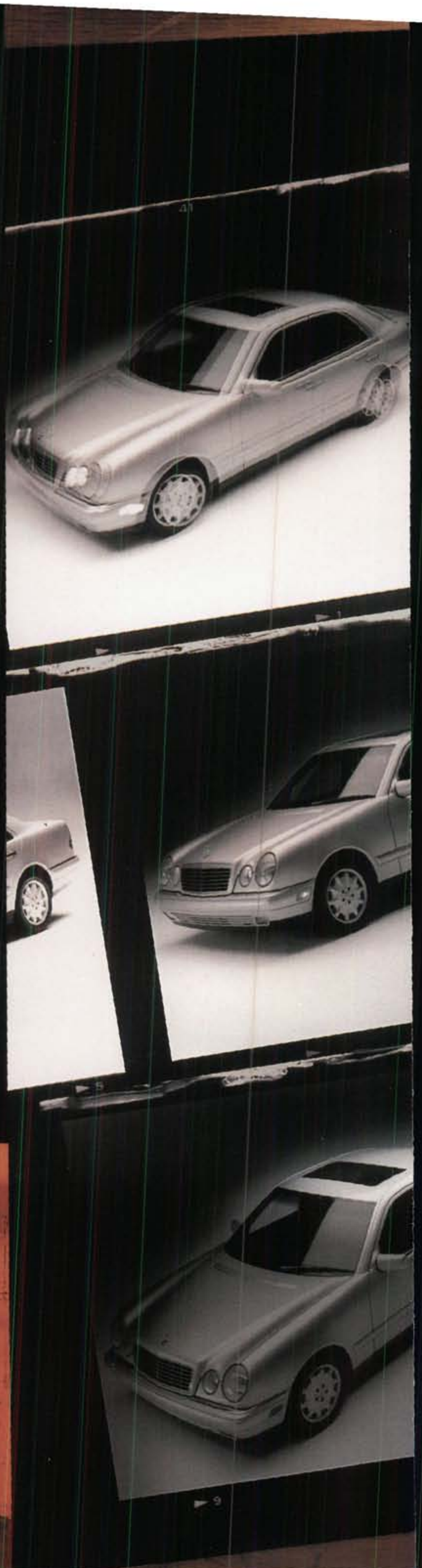

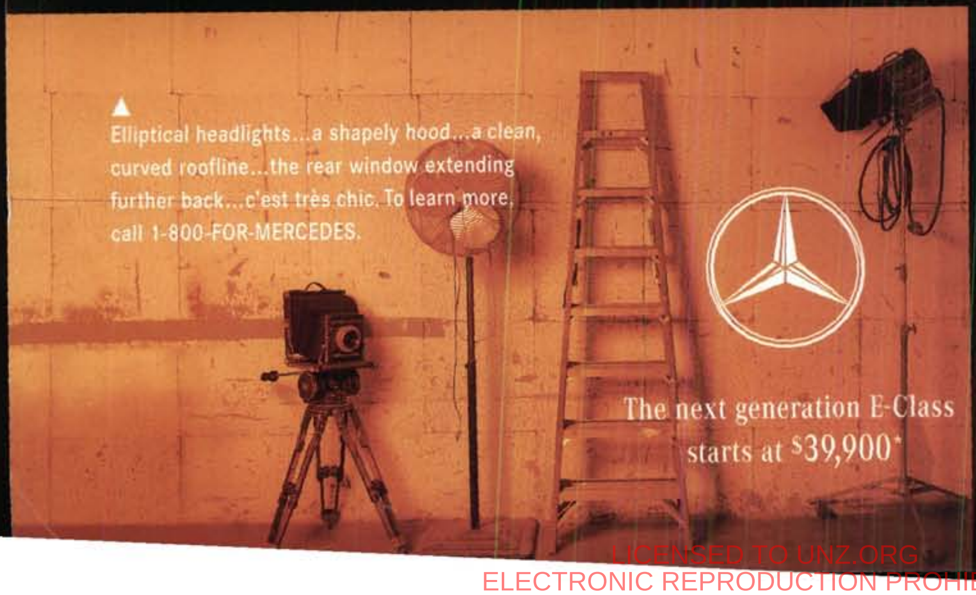

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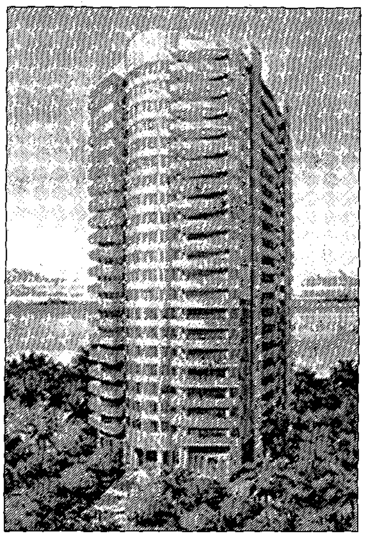

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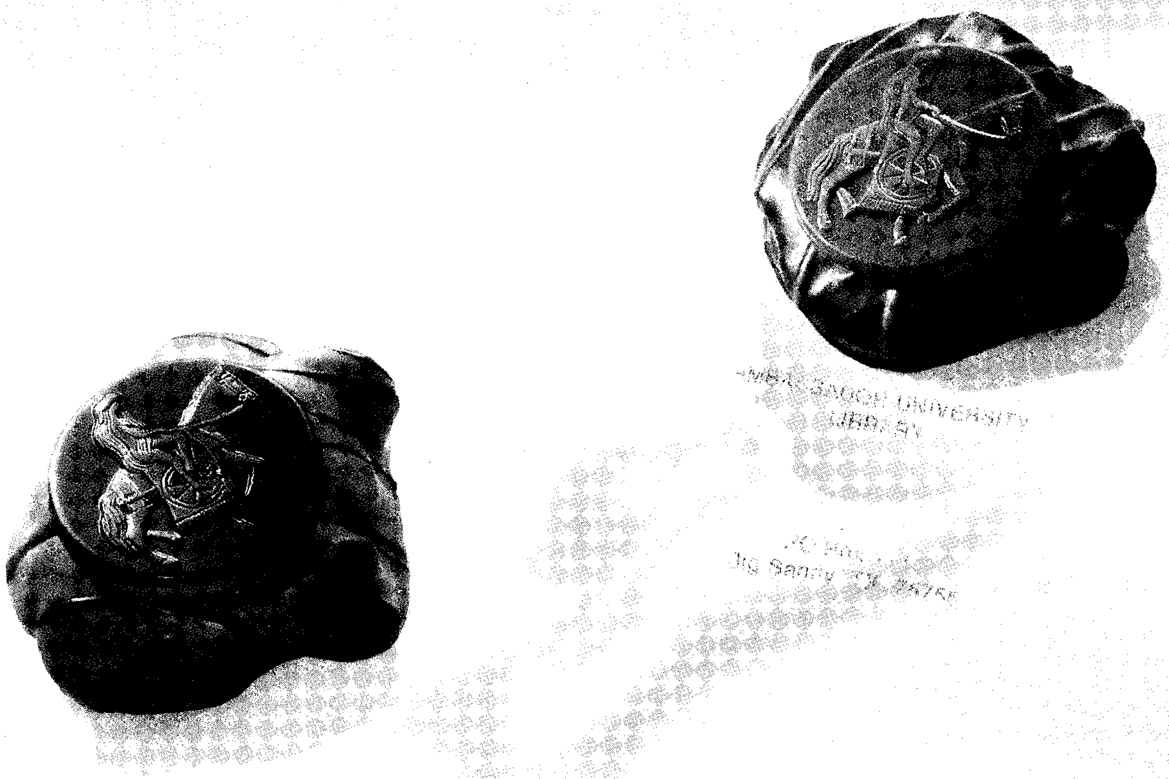

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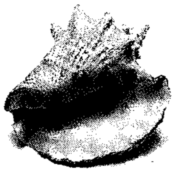

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COMMENT

MEDIEVAL NEW YORK

The bloodshed in Harlem has an ancient history.

On December 8th, a man with a gun and a match killed seven people and himself at Freddy's Fashion Mart, on 125th Street, in Harlem, and it seemed wise for a while afterward to hold back from saying much about it. For think of the Oklahoma City bombing of April 19, 1995. The bomb went off, and any number of commentators rushed to say what seemed obvious at the time, and very soon the obvious turned out to be false, and meanwhile a lot of innocent people had been slandered. In the case of the Harlem massacre, though, weeks have now passed, and facts have accumulated, and a few modest observations may be made.

One of these has to do with the rhetoric that preceded the killing. This term "bloodsucker," for instance—exactly what does it mean? The dispute that led to the Harlem massacre involved the landlord (a black church), a tenant (Freddy's Fashion Mart, Jewish-owned), and a subtenant (a record store, black-owned, whose lease Freddy's, under pressure from the landlord, was unwilling to renew). The "bloodsucker" in this situation was said to be the owner of Freddy's. "Bloodsucker" is the same word that was used by Louis Farrakhan, as part of the build-up to his Million Man March, and it referred, as he explained it, to exploitative merchants—Jewish ones, but also Koreans, Vietnamese, and Arabs—who do business in black neighborhoods and invest their earnings somewhere else.

As a term of abuse, "bloodsucker" is extremely old. In the Middle Ages, the belief arose among European Christians that Jews were murdering Christians, and especially children, and using their blood in Passover rituals; and, with that belief—known to Jews as the blood libel—to spur them on, mobs and armies once again threw themselves into the business of mass killings of Jews, beginning in the twelfth century and continuing, from time to time, well into the twentieth. It can be supposed that the people who invoke the blood libel today are quite unaware of its weird medieval resonance; but lack of awareness is characteristic of people who are in the grip of superstitious prejudices.

A second term that popped up during the anti-Freddy's campaign was "interloper": it was used by the Reverend Al Sharpton to describe Freddy's and stores like the nearby Bargain World, also Jewish-owned, that do business in Harlem. In this instance,

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the accusation suggests that Jewish businessmen (and, by extension, their fellow-storekeepers from other non-black groups) have come into Harlem from outside in order to, as it were, sink their teeth into the black population. And "interloper," too, has a long and anti-Semitic history.

Sigmund Freud commented on it in his book "Moses and Monotheism." He observed that in the psychology of anti-Semitism the Jews are conventionally regarded as "foreigners"—interlopers who have intruded themselves into one place or another to damage the rest of the population—even though the Jews may well have been among the original inhabitants. In a German city like Cologne (this was Freud's example), the Jewish community dates from the Roman Empire, and the Germanic tribes arrived later. But the psychological structure of anti-Semitism is such that in the anti-Semite's imagination the original population becomes the interloper, and the later arrivals become the original population.

That is the case on 125th Street. Harlem was built up as a city district toward the end of the last century, along with the construction of the El and the subways, and Jews became the predominant population in many parts of the neighborhood. There was a black population, too, and it continued to grow, and during the nineteen-twenties most of the Jews moved out—never all of them, though. The "interloping" Jews are, in reality, an entirely traditional element of the Harlem community. The belief to the contrary is merely a mild, modern expression of a very ancient prejudice.

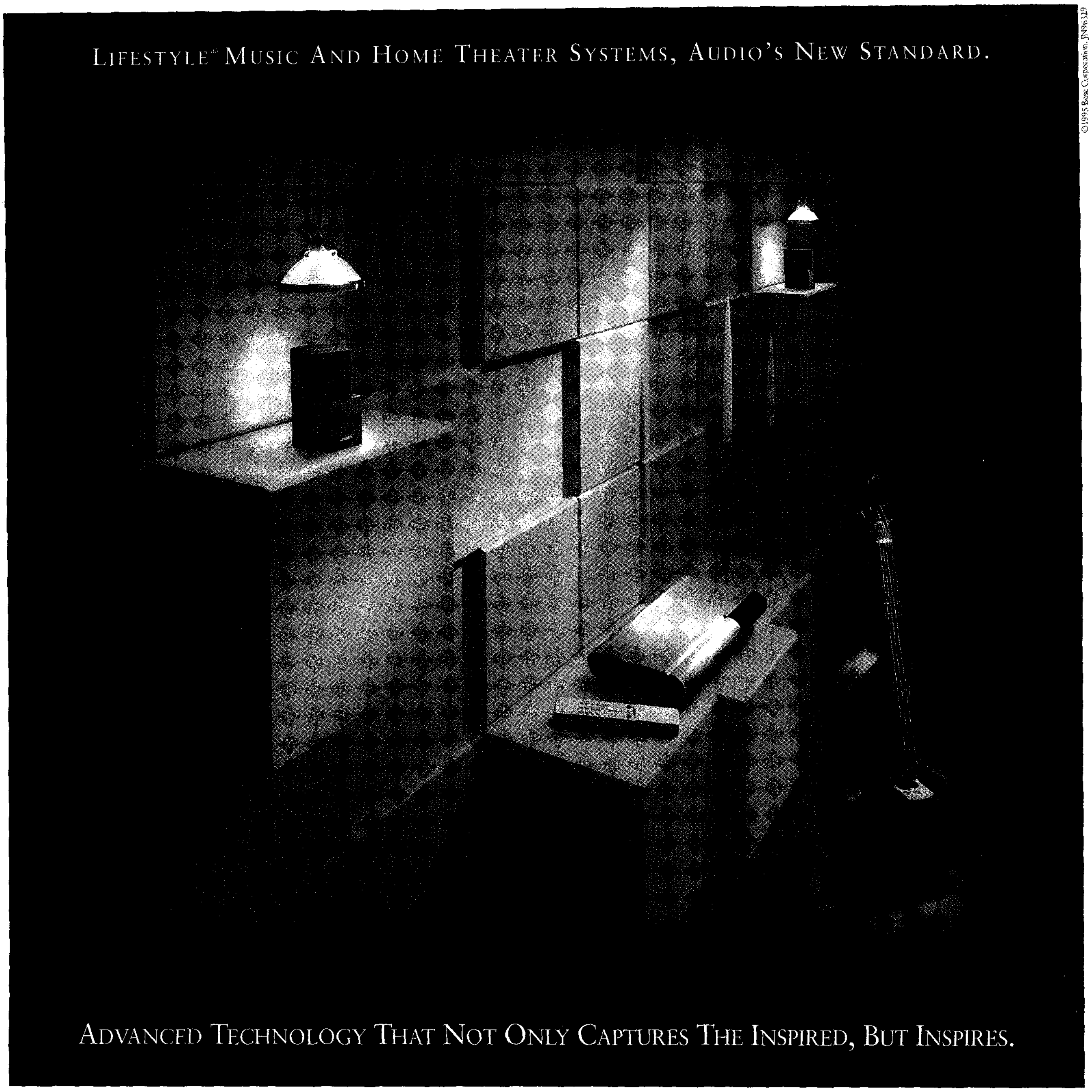
There are two reasons we should pay attention to these tiny echoes of medieval superstitions. First, the echoes are not so tiny. Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam has published a book called "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews"—and Farrakhan once devoted a significant amount of time on "The Arsenio Hall Show" to singing its praises—which is based on the most fundamental of the medieval anti-Semitic superstitions; namely, the idea that the Jews are engaged in an eternal conspiracy to do evil. And this book has had such success in the last few years not only among Farrakhan's official disciples but also among his admirers, who turn out to be legion, that one can only conclude that very large numbers of people have absorbed its all too medieval fantasies.

The second, and more important, reason for worry is one that has gone unremarked. The United States, unlike Europe and the Middle East, has never had a persistent historical pattern of anti-Semitic violence. There have been, over the decades, occasional bombings and killings of Jews by the Ku Klux Klan and some beatings by gangs, and in 1915 there was a famous lynching in Georgia. In 1984, a Denver talk-radio host, Alan Berg, was murdered by "Aryan" cultists. But never a sustained series of killings—until this decade, in this city.

For look at what has happened. In Brooklyn's Crown Heights riot of 1991 (in which Mr. Sharpton also played a role), one man was killed by a mob shouting "Get the Jew!" (and a second man was also killed, possibly in the mistaken belief that because he had a beard he, too, was Jewish). A year and a half later, the bombing of the World Trade Center, in which six people were killed, turned out to be part of a larger conspiracy with distinctly anti-Semitic aspects. In March, 1994, a man who was apparently motivated by grievances from his original home, in the Middle East, opened fire on a van carrying a group of Hasidic Jewish students across the Brooklyn Bridge, and killed one student and left another permanently crippled. And now, in Harlem just last month, following the rhetoric about bloodsuckers and interlopers (not to mention what has been reported about cruder threats to "burn the Jew store" down), the murderer and seven other people ended up dead—none of them happened to be Jewish, as has often been the case in anti-Semitic massacres—and four others were shot and wounded.

America has never been like that! But ours is an age of creepy demagogues, and of cowards who are too frightened or too lacking in principle to fight against the creepy demagogues, and of too few people who do have courage; and America is like that now.

—PAUL BERMAN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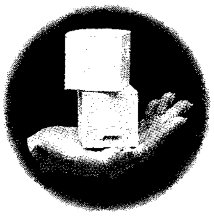

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DIVIDED SOCIETIES

Your coverage of the Rabin assassination, by Michael Walzer, David Remnick, and Amy Wilentz (November 20th), although wide-ranging, failed to address the central question it raised: When will serious thought be given to the notion of killing "in the name of God"? From Jim Jones, in Guyana, to David Koresh, near Waco, and on to Baruch Goldstein, in Hebron, and Yigal Amir, in Tel Aviv, such killing threatens the maintenance of ordered society. Don't the official bastions of organized religion, of all faiths, bear at least some responsibility when belief in God becomes a license to kill? Religious authorities make lame excuses about "lone killers" and "fanatics," but they owe us some serious reappraisal of religious indoctrinations that lead to murder.

M. RANGELL
San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

As an African-American who was raised in the South, I found Michael Kelly's "Segregation Anxiety" (Letter from Washington, November 20th) thoughtful in its observations about a shift by Southern voters to the Republican Party and about racial polarization in American politics. But he is wrong to attribute those changes to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. White Southerners' historical allegiance to the Democratic Party was a reaction to Reconstruction, which was led by Republicans and bitterly resented by whites. Now whites see Republicans as the upholders of their racial interests: if middle-class and blue-collar voters endorse policies that undermine their elderly relatives' health care, and support capital gains that few of them will enjoy, it is because they believe that white racial solidarity is more important than economic interests.

LELAND WARE
St. Louis, Mo.

"Segregation Anxiety" omits one critical factor in the potential realignment of African-American voters: independent politics. The black-Democrat/white-Republican bloc that redrew Southern-congressional-district lines was not merely a momentary alliance but also one more signal that the Democratic Party's relevance to black voters has declined precipitously. The Republican Party does not offer a viable alternative. This is why Minister Louis Farrakhan made a point at the Million Man March of galvanizing African-Americans as a "third force," which will freely choose among Democrats, Republicans, *and* independents. Were Ross Perot or another major independent to make a serious bid for the black vote in 1996, a new and powerful alliance between the white center and African-Americans—probably the country's two most disaffected constituencies—could reshape America's political life.

LENORA B. FULANI
New York City

FUTURE IMPERFECT

John Seabrook's article on Bill Gates ("Gates at the Temple," December 11th) mentions all Gates's major exploitations except the most relevant: the pecuniary one. Bill Gates is no visionary; only a true-blue capitalist could apologize for his technological wizardry by pretending that getting on-line would solve genuine social ills. Perhaps we should all unplug for a while to *think* about that.

KRISTER KNAPP
Boston, Mass.

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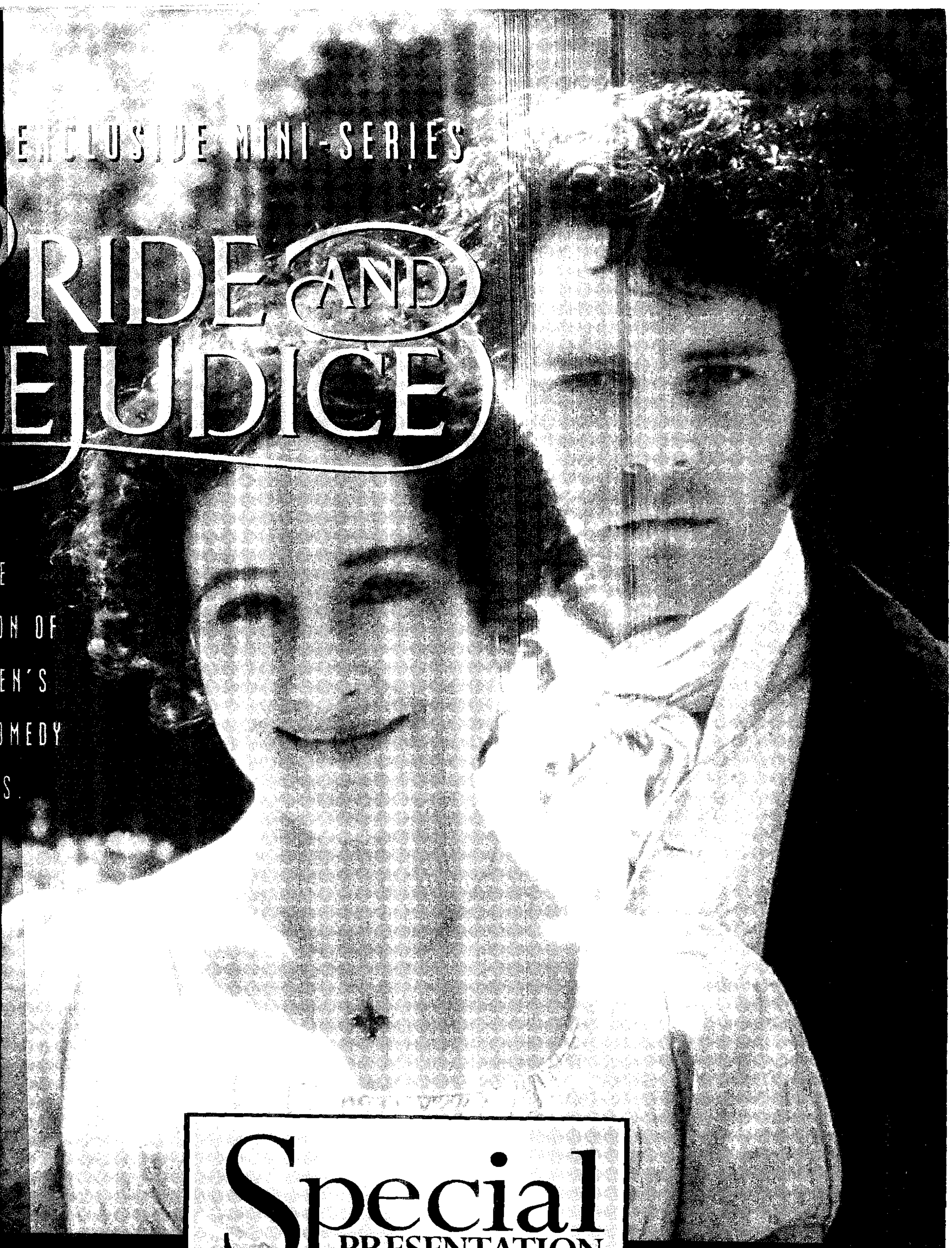

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bed and Sofa—A new musical based on director Abram Room's 1926 silent film about the Moscow housing shortage. Music by Polly Pen. Libretto by Laurence Klavan. Andre Ernotte directed. Previews begin Jan. 11. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Blue Window—Craig Lucas's 1984 play centers on a party given by a nervous hostess and attended by six other young New Yorkers. Directed by Joe Mantello. Previews begin Jan. 16. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

An Epidog—Mabou Mines and the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre present Lee Breuer's latest play—the second in a trilogy—about Rose the dog, now dead, and her between-incarnations adventures in Bardo, the Buddhist waiting room for souls. Previews begin Jan. 10. Opens Jan. 13 at 8 and continues through Feb. 4. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-9684.)

The Father—A new adaptation, by Richard Nelson, of Strindberg's 1887 tragedy, starring Frank Langella and Gail Strickland. Directed by Clifford Williams. Preview on Jan. 10. Opens Jan. 11 at 7. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Grey Zone—Tim Blake Nelson's drama deals with the complicity of the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando*, which consisted of Jews selected to assist in the camps. Opens Jan. 10 at 7. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

King Lear—F. Murray Abraham has the title role in this production of Shakespeare's tragedy, which also stars Jared Harris, as Edmund, and Jeffrey Wright, as the Fool. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Mata Hari—A revised version of the 1967 Martin Charnin–Ed Thomas–Jerome Coopersmith musical, about the exotic dancer who was executed on charges of espionage and her love affair with the French secret-service agent who entrapped her. Presented by the York Theatre Company. Directed by Mr. Charnin. Previews begin Jan. 12. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Measure for Measure—Theatre for a New Audience presents Shakespeare's play, under the direction of Barry Kyle. In previews. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The Preservation Society—A former débutante returns to North Carolina to tell her conservative family about her plans to marry her girlfriend, in this comedy by Wm. S. Leavengood. Previews begin Jan. 10. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Sheba—A new musical, about King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Book and lyrics by Sharleen Cooper Cohen. Music by Gary William Friedman. Previews begin Jan. 11. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

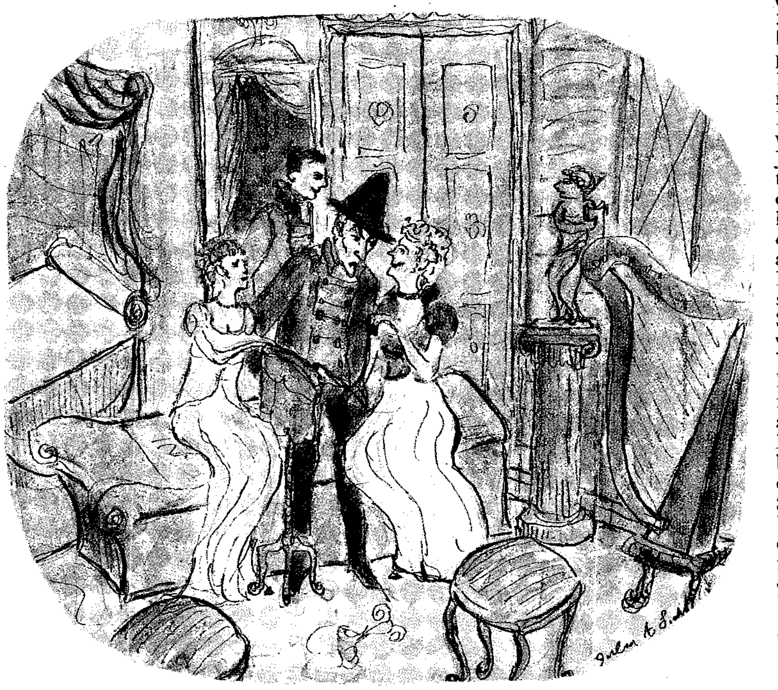
Virgins and Other Myths—The gay playwright Colin Martin gives the lowdown on his sexual history, in his solo show. Previews begin Jan. 16. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Wonderful Time—Josh Hamilton has the lead in a new romantic comedy by Jonathan Marc Sherman. Preview on Jan. 10. Opens Jan. 11 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

The Yiddish Trojan Women—Three Jewish sisters and their Polish refugee grandmother deal with personal and political predicaments in this play by Carole Braverman, set in Brooklyn in the eighties. In previews. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Bring In 'da Noise/Bring In 'da Funk—In attempting not only to return tap to black culture but to give black culture back to tap, director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover have made a drama that charts, with heroic energy, the evolution of the African-American beat from its rural Southern beginnings to its Northern urbanization and on to its present hip-hop incarnation in the choreography of Glover and his homeboy hoofers. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/4/95.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 28.)



Patricia Jones, Bradford Cover, Mark La Mura, and Joanne Camp, in "When Ladies Battle."

Dark Ride—Len Jenkins' 1981 play, about a group of misfits united by a common quest, gets a revival at Soho Rep, where it was produced originally. (46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

Dick Gregory Live—The master returns in a hilarious two-hour riff skewering our fondest end-of-millennium hypocrisies and delusions. Gregory, who is equally well known today as a civil- and human-rights activist and as the first mainstream black stand-up comedian, comments on present-day folly with an astringent yet avuncular air. His bite, although it has mellowed with time, is still sharp as he ruminates on everything from Bosnia to O.J. to airplane travel. We'd all be better off if we followed his advice to drink eight glasses of water a day and laugh a lot. A production of the Negro Ensemble Company. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Double Identity—The message in this Yiddish musical comedy (based on a Sholom Aleichem story) is clear: it's hard to be a Jew. The actors perform with conviction, especially Zypora Spaisman—the matriarch of Yiddish theatre—whose uncomplicated gestures say a great deal. In Yiddish; simultaneous English or Russian translation is available. (Folksbiene Playhouse, 123 E. 55th St. 755-2231.)

The Food Chain—The situations in Nicky Silver's new play are familiar and sitcom-ish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Hope Davis, as a dithery poet, and Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Hello, Dolly!—There is much to like about Carol Channing—the comic timing, the speaking voice, the star quality—but the evening is one long curtain call, and a bit of a strain on the nerves, as she attempts to prove over and over that she can do it all as well in her seventies as she could in her forties. Lee Roy Reams directed. (11/27/95) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Holiday—This very enjoyable production of Philip Barry's 1928 classic, starring Laura Linney as the rich but principled Linda Seton and Tony Goldwyn as the up-and-coming Johnny Case, follows a too often botched rule of romantic comedy: wit springs from delayed satisfaction. Reg Rogers contributes a hilarious turn as Linda's bibulous brother. David Warren directed, resourcefully. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 14.)

The Hope Zone—Olympia Dukakis plays Countess Wilhelmena Deach, an A.A. adherent and the owner of a run-down Maryland resort, in this play by Kevin Heelan. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

The Impostor—A provocative drama about success, power, and rape in New York's dog-eat-dog publishing world. The dialogue is witty and terse, though some of the insider jokes may be lost on those who are sane enough to have stayed out of the media business. The entire cast is impressive, and Calista Flockhart and Austin Pendleton are riveting in their inter-

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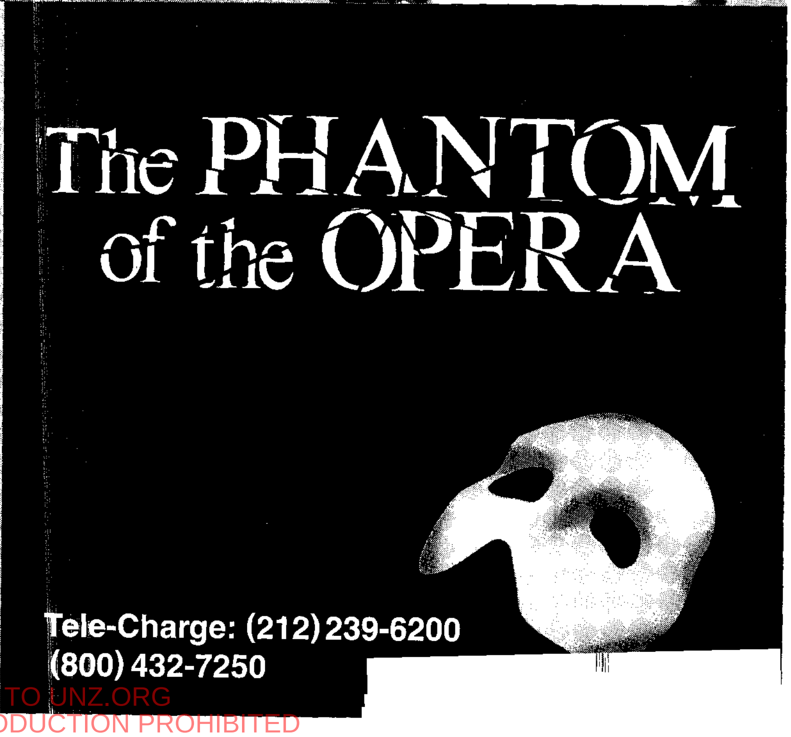
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pretations of insecure, self-hating characters. (Workhouse, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 967-0400.)

Jam On the Groove—Ten loose-limbed numbers—including a slapstick shadow dance, a martial-arts fantasia, a dance-noir detective story, and a shirtless six-man undulation that could serve as a master class on abdominal development—show off the impressive range of hip-hop choreography. All the dancers get the chance to flaunt their patented wiggles and spins, and the house rocks with a sort of call-and-response encouragement from the audience. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting Ibsen's 1888 drama, "The Lady from the Sea." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Master Class—In Terrence McNally's new play, Zoe Caldwell plays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Mrs. Klein—Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins)—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory. Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama dissects Klein's tempestuous relationship with her high-strung daughter and shrewdly explores the autobiographical parallels to Klein's seminal thesis on the effects of parental neglect. Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's newest drama, about a woman whose vision is restored after a lifetime of blindness, stars Catherine Byrne, Jason Robards, and Alfred Molina. Mr. Friel is the director. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Moon Over Buffalo—Ken Ludwig's backstage farce is as forgettable as Carol Burnett (whose last Broadway appearance was thirty years ago) is not: our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Murder at Minsing Manor: A Nancy-Boys Mystery—Another broad, antic romp by the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, in which an aging temptress (Everett Quinton) may or may not have dispatched her sugar daddy. The satire of church, state, and the Hardy Boys is right on target. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 14.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, is not so much a play of ideas as a play of notions, about art, science, the twentieth century (oh, *that* old thing); it features two wild and crazy guys—Einstein and Picasso—sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world, and contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor. Mark Nelson is a delightful, sparky Einstein, but Tim Hopper's Picasso is a big bore—The Artist Who Came to Dinner. The secondary characters are well drawn and, under the direction of Randall Arney, well played by, among others, Peter Jacobson, John Christopher Jones, Rondi Reed, and Harry Groener. Yet there's a sourness to the proceedings which may put you off, unless you happen to believe, as Martin seems to, that the arrival of rock and roll ruined everything. Say it ain't so, Steverino. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

The Principality of Sorrows—Two men (Robert Sean Leonard and David Lansbury) spend their lives under the spell of the same woman (Joanna Going), in Keith Bunin's drama, which is set in the garden of a Belgian castle. Directed by Elizabeth Gottlieb. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 13.)

The Revenger's Tragedy—In Cyril Tourneur's 1607 drama, which is guided by the dictate "When the bad bleed is the tragedy good," Vindice (Brian Frailey), a much abused gentleman, takes his revenge on a depraved, corrupt court. The Independent Theatre Company's feverish production seems to borrow elements from a Halloween spook house: torn velvet curtains, makeshift set, streams of blood, and shrill screams. In piling on the gore, it gives new meaning to the phrase "bad blood." Paul Todaro directed. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes Jan. 27.)

Shut Up I Tell You—The latest work by the performance group Elevator Repair Service combines slapstick, horror tales, and a fascination with outdated technology, among other elements. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Jan. 28.)

Swinging on a Star—A stylish, heartfelt showcase for Johnny Burke's songs, which include "Pennies from Heaven," "Misty," and "Thank Your Lucky Stars and Stripes." The cast and band are nearly perfect; the show was written and directed by Michael Leeds and choreographed, brilliantly, by Kathleen Marshall. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

True Crimes—Romulus Linney's new play, set in Appalachia in 1900, shows how a few of our more common failings—lust, greed, fascination with the misfortunes of others—can lead us to our doom. Unfortunately, the characters are either single-faceted exemplars of weakness or unbelievably naïve, so their descent into crime doesn't have much impact. Despite some fine performances, neither the cast nor Mr. Linney's direction can save the script. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Closes Jan. 21.)

The Universe—Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theatre presents the final work in his trilogy. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Valley Song—Athol Fugard's first post-apartheid play, set in a rural village in South Africa, is an intimate piece, with only two actors. The author himself (who also directed) plays two parts, a white Afrikaaner and a colored tenant farmer, and Lisa Gay Hamilton plays the farmer's young granddaughter, who has a gift for singing and wants to go to Johannesburg. The play tells a simple story—the grandfather faces the prospect of losing the only family he has as well as the patch of land he has farmed all his life—but its glimpses of the new South Africa are subtly, richly resonant. It shows the fear and the heartbreak that come with change, and reminds us that change doesn't always deliver on its promises. Hamilton gives a radiant, openhearted performance; Fugard is solid, though his role-shifting causes some confusion. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Jan. 21.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic, and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) is patchwork. The leggy Rachel York, as a blond bimbo, at least enjoys herself—and the audience enjoys her, too. (11/20/95) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

When Ladies Battle—A spirited production of Eugène Scribe and Ernest Legouvé's 1851 comedy, about political and amorous intrigue. Michael Feingold's new translation is clear and funny; John Rando's precise, witty direction makes each absurd plot twist a greater delight than the one before and matches the verbal humor with lovely bits of physical comedy. The cast is also first-rate, particularly Arnie Burton, as a character who is "brave and timid at the same time" and somehow makes his face convey both traits at once, to hilarious effect. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **SYLVIA:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Jan. 10 at 8: "Serenade," "The Four Temperaments," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 8: "Jeu de Cartes," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "Chaconne." . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8: "Reliquary," "Calcium Light Night," "Behind the China Dogs," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 2: "Glass Pieces," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 3: "Serenade," "2 & 3 Part Inventions," and "Chaconne." . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 8: "Prodigal Son," "Calcium Light Night," "Reliquary," and "West Side Story Suite." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

"Altogether Different"—Three weeks of performances by seven contemporary-dance companies, with programs that, in every case, include a première and at least one seasoned work. Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 14 at 7:30: **SUNGSOO AHN PICK-UP GROUP,** in "Bim," "Whatever," and two premières, "Underbelly" and "Queen." . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 8: The **KEVIN WYNN COLLECTION,** in "Of Sushi, Collard Greens, and Salsa," "Itapua II," "Begat, Begat," and the première of "Black Clouds Under My Feet." . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8 and Jan. 13 at 2: **DOUG ELKINS DANCE COMPANY,** in "Scott, Queen of Marys," "Narcoleptic Lovers," and the première of "The Sky Is Falling (So Bury Me Standing)." . . . ¶ Jan. 13 at 8 and Jan. 14 at 2: **BUGLISI/FOREMAN DANCE,** in "Field of Loves," "Molting," and the première of "Bare to the Wall." . . . ¶ Jan. 16 at 8: **TERE O'CONNOR DANCE,** in "Notes on Shame," "Greta in the Ditch," and the première of "Mother." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Jan. 21.)

"L'Amour Bleu"—Tenor Thomas Bogdan returns with his musical masque on gay themes, abetted by singer-dancers Kenneth Lockwood, Randolph Curtis Rand, Robert Osborne, and Cliff Townsend, all guided by the evening's Terpsichore, choreographer Ching Gonzalez. (Danspace, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 11-14 at 8:30. Through Jan. 21.)

Wendy Osserman Dance Company—The twentieth-anniversary season of the six-member troupe includes performances of "Xenomania," "Constructivist," and "I Never Saw Another Butterfly." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 11-13 at 8 and Jan. 14 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Jon Hendricks—In the early fifties, when the singer was a student at the University of Toledo Law School, Charlie Parker played a gig with him and offered the following words of wisdom: "You are not a lawyer, you are a jazz musician. Quit school and come to New York." The rest is history. This evening's program is called "Hendricks and Hoagy." (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Jan. 11 at 8.)

Quraishi—The Afghani lutenist. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. 545-7536. Jan. 13 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **Phillip Officer** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery. Jan. 12-13: The **Joanne Brackeen** quartet. Tapping into the contemporary wellspring fed by Tyner, Hancock, and Evans, Brackeen has fashioned an engaging personal sound at the piano. Everything she touches, from American songbook standards and Brazilian melodies to her own modernist pieces, is stamped with jazz authority. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—**Steve Turre** and his conch-wielding Sanctified Shells drop by on Jan. 12.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. Straight out of Memphis comes **Charles Thomas** (through Jan. 13), a local legend whose students include such excellent New York transplants as Mulgrew Miller and James Williams. Thomas shows all the poise of the mid-fifties Red Garland and the funky filigree of Phineas Newborn. With Bobby Durham and Peter Washington. The **Larry Willis and Rufus Reid** duo takes over the house on Jan. 15. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and—holy hotcakes, Batman—the amazing **Eartha Kitt**. She is still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. She inhabits her songs: when she sings "I Wanna Be Evil," you don't doubt for a second that she could spit tacks. . . . ¶ Pianist **Peter Mintun** is in charge at the Bemelmans Bar. A genuine throwback to a gentler time, this elegant performer specializes in curios from the twenties and thirties. Agreeable and reassuring without being over-gracious, he's sort of a curio himself.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. The **Mingus Big Band,** a fourteen-piece ensemble that concentrates on the tricky, cacophonous work of its namesake, the late Charles Mingus—still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Set in a mammoth turn-of-the-century ballroom, this jazz club is all marble and gilt, with a few modern touches, such as the zebra-patterned carpet in the V.I.P. room upstairs.

THE GREAT WALDO

Terry Waldo, at Knickerbocker.

RICHARD MERKIN

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through Jan. 14: the **Dave Valentin and Hilton Ruiz** quintet. On Jan. 16, the **Andrew Hill** trio and the **T. S. Monk** sextet begin a weeklong run. Though Hill's music is dark, elusive, unsettling, and utterly beautiful, his artistic peak was in the sixties, the only decade that could tolerate such an oblique harmonic stance, jerky mid-tempo melodies, and dirgelike ballads (his trademark). But it wasn't free jazz and it wasn't hard bop—it was a private music that never really fit in any time. Whatever it was, you can now find it gloriously chronicled on "The Complete Andrew Hill Blue Note Sessions," which has just been released on Mosaic Records. If the pianist and composer has mellowed over the years, there's still enough of the individualist in him to remind you of the good (and weird) old days. The now-you-see-him-now-you-don't Hill has played the outsider for so long that exposure to the spotlight may have dizzying effects. / One of the tastiest pleasures to emerge in recent years has been T. S. Monk's self-contained small group, dedicated to overlooked classics of the hard-bop repertory as well as to more recent compositions in that tradition.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. Jan. 10-13: **Terry Waldo,** a witty charmer who looks like a slightly down-at-the-heels version of T. S. Eliot and specializes in twenties-style stride piano in the manner of James P. Johnson.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 10: **Don Byron** plays klezmer and the music of Raymond Scott. Jan. 11: Former Ambitious Lover **Arto Lindsay.**

Le Madeleine, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **Gene Bertoncini** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **New Orleans Funeral and Ragtime Orchestra,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—This plush night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab, is generally the home of torch singers and cabaret divas, but through early February, the joint has been given over to the three-headed team of **Merry Clayton, Marianne Faithfull,** and **Darlene Love.** Clayton is best remembered as the scary soprano on the Stones' "Gimme Shelter." Faithfull (who also had a thing or two to do with the Stones) still has a voice that's a knowing mix of honey, steel, and gravel. Sixties chanteuse Love (her credits include work with everyone from Phil Spector to Frank Sinatra) is fresh from "Portrait of a Singer," her long-running revue at the Bottom Line. Together, they promise to bring a little sixties spirit to the sixty-fifth floor. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to the Kit McClure sextet, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A jazz outpost where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through Jan. 14: Cecil Brooks and the Muse/Landmark All-Stars.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through Jan. 14: **Wessell Anderson** and **Wycliffe Gordon.** Spun off Wynton Marsalis's late, lamented septet, trombonist Gordon and saxman Anderson have put together an ensemble whose modal-bop precision is tarted up with a Deep South strut. The **Barry Harris** trio takes charge on Jan. 16. While most bop pianists attack the keys with the intensity of Secretariat on a good day, Harris seduces them with his easy touch, always placing melody before chops. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. Through Jan. 13: the **STEVE KUHN** trio. As lyrical as he is overlooked, keyboardist Kuhn has enjoyed a diverse career, from his stint with Coltrane's first band to his own artsy forays on ECM to his present-day identity as a tough-minded mainstream player.

ZINC BAR, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—If not quite a legend, **CAL COLLINS** (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays) is definitely a rare bird—a superb guitarist who's been cutting no-nonsense records for the past three decades.

ROCK, ETC.

A.K.A., 77 W. Houston St., at Wooster St. (673-7325)—Hip-hop, jazz, and world beat meet in this small, velvet-draped club.

BLARNEY STAR, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. Jan. 13: In Their Own Words, a semi-regular program in which a handful of songwriters show off their wares. This evening's lineup features Bobby Braddock, Tish Hinojosa, and John Gorka.

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—In the early eighties, when punk and New Wave were losing their flavor and the airwaves were saturated with synth-pop and heavy metal, a few bands started playing vintage Vox guitars and Farfisa organs, wearing Beatle boots, and singing about the big issues—cars and beer and, of course, girls. The garage revival was short-lived, but the **LYRES,** who were the genre's ablest practitioners (here on Jan. 13), will prove that in the right hands a good riff, a solid beat, and sneering, adenoidal vocals are never tiresome.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Jan. 10-11: Lonnie Shields. Jan. 12-13: **SUGAR BLUE.**

CHINA CLUB, 2130 Broadway, at 75th St. (877-1166)—Glam seekers come here hoping to rub shoulders with models and celebrities but instead find themselves hypnotized by the big fish tank over the bar. Occasionally, rock stars do show up to jam after a performance in town, but mostly you'll find a roster of heavily moussed upstarts.

THE COOLER, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel dungeon deep in the heart of the meat district. Jan. 12: The Dirt Merchants.

DOWNTIME, 251 W. 30th St. (695-2747)—A friendly split-level bar with a dazzling quasi-Cubist paint job and an above-average pool table.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** are in the house every Saturday night.

FLANNERY'S, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).

GONZALEZ Y GONZALEZ, 625 Broadway, at Houston St. (473-8787)—Loud, brash, and big—de rigueur for the lower-Broadway dining scene. The stage is in the rear, about a city block from the entrance.

IBIS SUPPER CLUB, 327 W. 44th St. (262-1111)—Live music, belly dancing, and an honest-to-God whirling dervish, every Wednesday through Sunday.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—An unassuming basement restaurant-bar, where you can drink cheap and catch live music nightly. Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

MATCH, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Monday night, thanks to the **SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND.** Dining.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 13: Songwriters **PIERCE TURNER** and **JOY ASKEW,** two topnotch local fixtures.

MONKEY BAR, 60 E. 54th St. (838-2600)—Beyond the monkey murals, there's a bright see-and-be-seen dining arena that's perfect for committing high-profile indiscretions in a strapless gown. But the place to be is the dark and crowded bar up front, by the grand piano, where the bar stools look like stuffed olives. You perch on the pimiento. Dining.

NELL'S, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop.

PADDY REILLY'S MUSIC BAR, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**BLACK 47** plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

LES POULETS, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Jan. 14: **GIL SCOTT-HERON.** In the seventies, while many of his R. & B. peers were blissfully succumbing to disco fever, this singer-pianist (who's also a poet and a novelist) was fusing jazz and funk textures with sobering political rap. His last record, "Spirits," proves that he's still ahead of the curve. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Jan. 13: Reggae giants **THIRD WORLD.** The second annual **TRIBUTE TO DANNY GATTON,** a two-night salute to the late guitarist, gets under way on Jan. 16. The Washington *Post* once dubbed Gatton "the preëminent guitarist of the post-World War II generation," but most people never heard of him, and he did little to shake the world's-greatest-unknown-guitarist mantle: he hated touring and rarely played outside his native Washington, D.C. His blistering electric-guitar work demonstrated an encyclopedic command of rockabilly, bebop, and Western swing, and he rolled them together into something he called redneck jazz. He recorded a handful of hard-to-find albums, including two for Elektra ("88 Elmira Street," in 1991, and "Cruisin' Deuces," in 1993), which ultimately dropped him from its roster. In October, 1994, after thirty years of low-rent gigs and celebrated failures, Gatton put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger. He was forty-nine. Last January, Tramps held a three-night all-star benefit for the wife and fourteen-year-old daughter the guitarist left behind. This year's lineup includes guitar god **ALBERT LEE** and other special guests.

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Jan. 10: Tattooed folk star **DANIEL CARTIER.** Jan. 12: Ska with the **SCOFFLAWS.** Jan. 13: **OMINOUS SEAPODS.**

TABLES FOR TWO

Dining around town

THE KITCHEN CLUB, 30 Prince St., at Mott St. (274-0025)—To join the Kitchen Club, you part turquoise drapes and enter a yellow chamber lined with etchings, prints, and, most notably, photos: Fabulon (obscure recording artist), Beverly Hills (drag queen), a pair of ample, naked fin-de-siècle ladies astride a stuffed pig. Sconces, shaded candles, and violet votives cast a theatrical glow. Marja Samsom, the Dutch-born chef and owner, waves from the kitchen; she has a blond Tintin forelock and wears a white pinafore that looks like a Christmas-card choirboy's gown, only short.

The tables are set with lacquered chopsticks and bread knives, which may be traded for the Western battery, depending on what you order from the schizoid but enticing menu. The list of appetizers keels from *gyoza*-like mushroom dumplings to "unusually delicious chicken soup"; among the entrées are both organic milk-fed Dutch veal (with a sherry-butter sauce) and a bento box dinner called Taste of Japan. Today's fish might be finished with a miso sauce or slathered with an orange-zest-spiked tapenade. This time of year, there's mushroom medley ("a classic already")—four kinds, fricasseed in wine and cream—and gamy venison with green peppercorns. You might finish with a chunky, hazelnutty linzer torte or a creamfest of trifle.

When you learn that Samsom's first career was in performance art and that her husband is Japanese, things start to make sense—for example, her record collection, which embraces Parisian accordion music and Jimmy Durante, and her familiarity with the extraordinary *yamaimo*, a Japanese mountain potato that is like a cross between a daikon and the Alien. "I only perform here now," she says, speaking with a faint Dutch accent. "Every night a practical conceptual piece, and then—flush! Start again." (Open Tuesdays through Fridays for lunch and dinner; weekends, dinner only. Entrées $5-$20.)

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Haute Couture." Detail and tailoring are the focus in the Costume Institute's examination of high fashion since 1870, from Worth to Lacroix. Through March 24. . . . ¶ Black-and-white photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto, chosen from three different series: "Seascapes," "Motion Pictures," and "Hall of Thirty-three Bays." Through Jan. 14. . . . ¶ "Howard Hodgkin: Paintings 1975-1995." Luxuriantly decorative abstract paintings whose exuberant patterns and electric colors bring to mind the florid arabesques favored by such Bloomsbury lights as Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Dora Carrington; well installed and ravishingly lit, they seem to glow with an inner fire. The retrospective goes a long way toward solidifying Hodgkin's position as a torchbearer for what is left of abstractionism. Through Jan. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944," a hundred and sixty paintings and drawings and a re-creation of the artist's last studio. Through Jan. 30. . . . ¶ A small show of works from the seventies to the present by the French Conceptualist Annette Messager, who combines photographed, painted, and drawn images with found and constructed objects and text. Through Jan. 16. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology." Curator Germano Celant's selection of Oldenburg's work goes a long way toward recalling the radicalism of the Pop progenitor's immensely influential performances, installations, and soft sculptures. Wisely emphasizing the artist's work through the early seventies, Celant soft-pedals the "humorous" large-scale public commissions that have been the heart of his activity since. The museum has also managed a coup: an enormous soft shuttlecock has been created especially for this exhibition; installed on one of the upper tiers, its white tendrils spill over the railing like the unruly hair of an abstract Medusa. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ "Joel-Peter Witkin," a mid-career retrospective of the photographer's astonishing and horrifying œuvre. Through Jan. 14. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—"The Material Imagination" features eighteen sculptures and conceptual works by such artists as Martin Puryear, Louise Bourgeois, Richard Long, Lawrence Weiner, and Kiki Smith. Through Jan. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Moving Out," a survey of Robert Frank's career, overflows with assertions of the photographer's visual poetry, with wall texts and catalogue essays supplying quotations from Frank about vision and song and hope and despair. It's curious, then, that the show underplays "The Americans" (1958), his chief poetic composition; fewer than forty selections are on view—plainly, even pallidly, installed. But the rest of the work comes out from under the shadow of "The Americans." Frank's early pictures are concise, with deep gray and black tones and a few telling silver highlights. His later autobiographical works, composed of several images with painted or scratched-in words, are steeped in ideas about memory and change; they move from painful elegies to brisk, clear-eyed, even happy, odes to being alive. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965," a loving, ambitious tribute to the angry young men of the era that nevertheless doesn't really solve the perennial problem of literature-based exhibitions: books in glass cases have little to say to people who haven't read them. Yet there are lively paintings—doodles, really—by Kerouac and Burroughs and a family-snapshot album of the movement by Ginsberg. Anyone who was a teen-ager during those years will feel the numinous pull of the manuscript of "Howl" and of the Teletype-paper roll on which Kerouac typed "On the Road." Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ Several box constructions and collages by Joseph Cornell. Through March 10. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

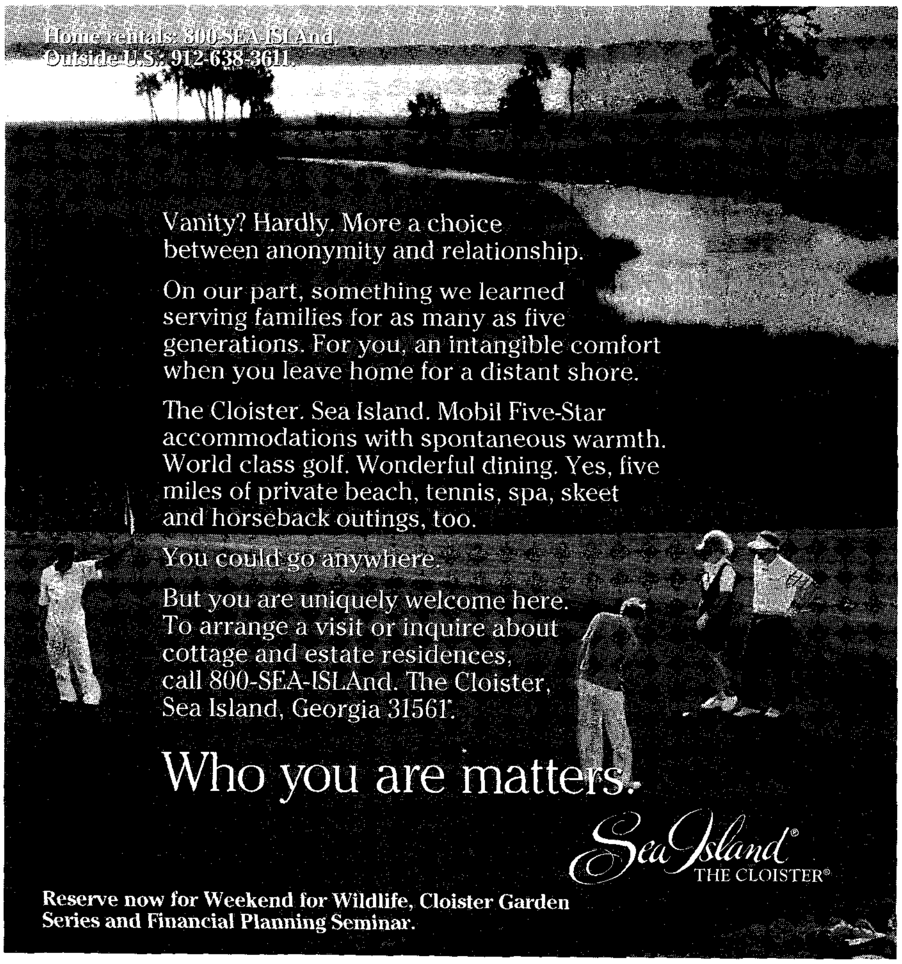
American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Aerial photographs of pre-Columbian ruins and other sites in Peru, by Marilyn Bridges. Through Feb. 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion." Fifty examples of the stylish inspirations of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973): evening gloves with reptilian scales; a day suit with metallic ladybugs, grasshoppers, and cockroaches creeping across it; a hat of celluloid grapes; and more. Through March 24. . . . ¶ Human figures rise out of root and boulder shapes in Alison Saar's sculptures "Tree Souls" and "Stone Souls." . . . ¶ "Expressionism to Neo-Expressionism: 20th-Century German Prints at the Brooklyn Museum." Through Jan. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—Seventy-three contemporary wooden, metal, ceramic, and glass vessels from the White House collection of American crafts are currently in residence. Through Feb. 25. . . . ¶ "Craft in the Machine Age, 1920-1945," a host of objects—furniture, textiles, vases, turned bowls, cocktail shakers, crystal—whose creation was influenced by modernist aspects of Scandinavian, French, and Bauhaus design. Through Feb. 25. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Butler Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 114th St.—" 'The Tall Swift Shadow of a Ship at Night': Stephen and Cora Crane." The lives and careers of the naturalist writer and his common-law wife are documented in a large selection of books, letters, manuscripts, photographs, and scrapbooks, including first editions of "The Red Badge of Courage" and "Maggie, a Girl of the Streets." Through Feb. 16. (Open Mondays, noon to 7:45; Tuesdays through Fridays, 9 to 4:45.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—Gerhard Richter's "Atlas," more than six hundred large panels mounted with thousands of photographs. For upward of thirty years, the German painter has been amassing both archival material (including images of Hitler and of concentration-camp survivors, as well as postcards and pornography) and his own snapshots as sources for his art. For nearly as long he's been organizing these thousands of pictures on panels. Richter has always toyed with the interplay between photography and painting; this strange, obsessive, ongoing art project provides valuable insights into the methods and themes of one of the most influential and enigmatic artists of the postwar era. Through Feb. 29. (An exhibition of Richter's paintings is at Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St., through Jan. 13.) . . . ¶ "European Couples, and Others," a selection of the minimalist sculptor Dan Flavin's work from 1964 to 1978, all drawn from Dia's own collection. These fluorescent-light sculptures appear to extraordinary advantage in Dia's antiseptic space. Most of them inhabit cor-



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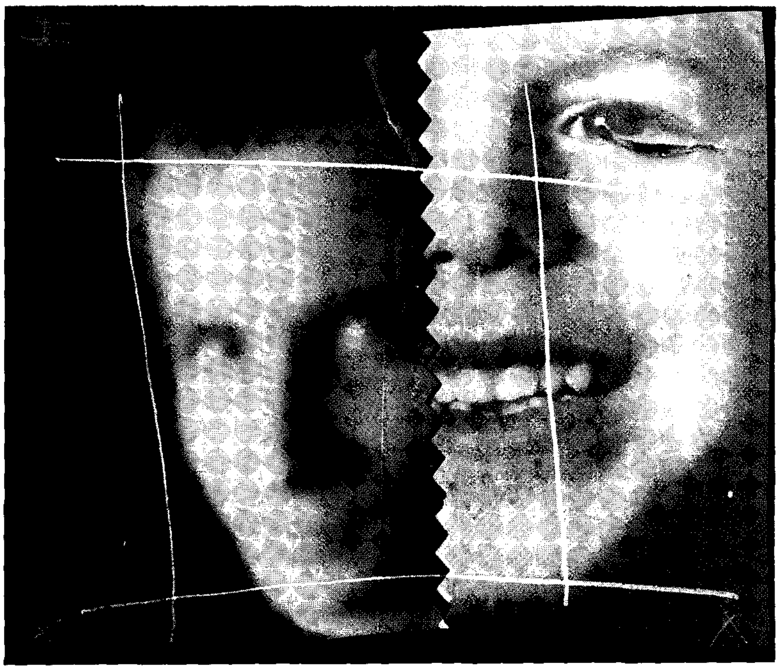
ners after the manner of Russian avant-garde works by the likes of Malevich and Tatlin; their glow dematerializes the plain geometry of the architecture, rendering their surroundings sensuous and atmospheric. . . . ¶ "Your Skin in This Weather Bourne Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume" is the laboriously poetic title of Jessica Stockholder's rambling, ramshackle installation, which utilizes (among *many* other things) hot-pink carpet, lime-green linoleum, purple milk crates, and a tumescent heap of stuffed shirts. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St.—"Paris Modern: The Swedish Ballet 1920-25." The Ballets Suédois was an avant-garde hothouse nourished on the contributions of de Chirico, Picabia, Cocteau, Léger, Cole Porter, René Clair, and many others. The two hundred and fifty objects here—drawings, costume and set designs, stage models, photographs, and two full-size backdrops—admirably document the company's short, fiery history. Through Jan. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"The Butterfly and the Bat." James McNeill Whistler's exquisite portrait of the aristocratic ne'er-do-well Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac is one of the Frick's most famous holdings. This exhibition, devoted to their friendship, turns up a trunkload of treasures: some very amusing caricatures by Max Beerbohm and others; a brilliantly colored abstraction by Gustave Moreau (loaned by the Musée Gustave Moreau, in Paris) that predates Kandinsky's first abstract paintings by at least four years; an indecipherable sketch of Montesquiou by Marcel Proust, which has never been exhibited before. The painter and the dandy were icons of camp long before Susan Sontag codified the term; among the oddments on display here are Whistler's calling-card case, covered with daintily embossed butterflies, and a copy of the count's chinchilla cape, by Revillon. Through Jan. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)



Self-portrait by the photographer Gerald Slota (Ricco/Maresca).

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St.—"Refined" doesn't adequately describe the exquisite lacquerware boxes on exhibit: the word is "perfect." Dating from the sixteenth century to the late eighteenth, they depict scenes and symbols from poetry and legend, using porcelain, gold dust, and semiprecious stones to embellish the gleaming lacquered wood. On the lid of an eighteenth-century inkstone box, two porcelain birds wing above a rocky shoreline made from bits of coral, malachite, and mother-of-pearl, against the fathomless lacquered blackness of the night sky. A jaunty headrest, specially designed to accommodate a lady's elaborate hairdo, has a drawer for a little incense burner, to perfume her hair while she sleeps. The objects are lit from above, through frosted glass, which allows them to glow and smolder like the treasures they are. Through Jan. 14. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change, 1890-1990," a large exhibition of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and graphic works by fifty artists, including Eric Bulatov, Léon Bakst, Marc Chagall, Ilya Kabakov, El Lissitzky, and Komar & Melamid. Through Jan. 28. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—After a visit to "Haute Couture" at the Met, stop by "Uncommon Threads: Three Hundred Years of New York Style," a display of seventy-five complete ensembles. In addition to ball gowns and Broadway costumes, there are several pieces with a distinctly democratic air: a "Rosie the Riveter" jumpsuit; a "man's day ensemble," circa 1970 (brushed-denim elephant bell-bottoms with a body-tattoo T-shirt); and the chocolate-brown uniform of James Jarrett, Jr., who served as the doorman at Henri Bendel for more than seventy years. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Growing Up in New York: The Photography of Arthur Leipzig." Black-and-white pictures, from the forties through the sixties, of children's games, East River diving, sit-ins, opening night at the opera, and more. Through March 31. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Edvard Munch and Harald Sohlberg: Landscapes of the Mind," a conspectus of the work of two turn-of-the-century Norwegian painters. Munch is represented by many of his finest canvases, including the mesmerizing "Madonna," and "Vampire," a lamplit scene of a couple kissing which virtually tingles with horror. "The Scream" is here, too, in lithograph form. Sohlberg's vision was more uplifting than harrowing; he specialized in mountain landscapes at dusk (when the arctic horizon was ablaze) and afterward. Through Jan. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11:30 to 5:30; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—Forty maps of New York City and State, from the society's vast collection of Western Hemisphere cartography. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ "Clement Clarke Moore of Chelsea and 'A Visit from St. Nicholas.'" The handwritten original, from 1822, is on display along with various illustrated editions and other materials relating to the author and his environs. Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ An exhibition of posters and photographs from the Second World War. Through Feb. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Flights of Fancy," thirteen drawings by Charles Addams, most of which appeared in these pages. . . . ¶ Part two of "The Collecting Adventure, 1895-1995" examines the way the library has preserved sacred texts, original manuscripts, and early printed books. Through Feb. 3. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

André Masson (1896-1987)—Twenty-six Surrealist paintings from 1941 to 1945, the years when the Parisian artist was a war exile in New Preston, Connecticut. Through March 2. (Zabriskie, in its new location, at 41 E. 57th St.)

Alice Neel (1900-84)—The painter's overweening preference was for pitilessly honest portraiture. Several of her pregnant nude figures are on view here. Through Feb. 3. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

E. Ambrose Webster (1869-1935)—American Impressionist paintings of rocky Azores seascapes and of New England in winter. The compositions are closely patterned on Monet, but the palette is unlike anything in French painting: not reds and blues but shrieking cerise, magenta, and puce. Through Jan. 20. (Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Starting with Flowers"—Painted blossoms in various contexts, from Janet Fish, Robert Kushner, Whitfield Lovell, Lucio Pozzi, and Jimmy Wright. Through Feb. 10. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Exploring the Unknown"—The title of this well-chosen survey of American Surrealism refers as much to the artists as to their murky Freudian subject matter. Some big names are deployed—there's a marvellous Cornell box and manifestly Miró-inspired watercolors by Rothko and Pollock—but the real interest is in the competent hacks who put an American spin on a European idiom. "Eclipse," by Charles Rain (1911-85), is delightfully dated: classical statues and a spooky iron gate tilt in a swirling mist, looking like a Hollywood dream sequence. A small room is devoted to the Tanguyesque visions of Boris Margo (1902-95). Through Jan. 27. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St.)

"Film Posters of the Russian Avant-Garde"—Rodchenko's poster for "Potemkin" is the jewel of this lot, which also includes work by Vladimir and Georgi Stenberg, Nikolai Prusakov, Grigory Borisov, and Anatoly Belskii. Through Jan. 20. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St.)

Group Show—Designs and prototypes for furniture, lamps, tools, utensils, and more, by a group of architects that includes Ettore Sottsass, Marcel Breuer, Frank Gehry, Charles Eames, and Philip Johnson. Through Jan. 17. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Group Show—Small-scale paintings, drawings, sculptures, and photographs by a large group of artists, including Vincent La Scala, James Rosenquist, Deborah Kass, Sandro Chia, Joseph Beuys, Rocky Schenck, and Philip Taaffe. Through Jan. 20. (Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St.)

Short List—**JAMES BARSNESS,** Adams, 50 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **BRUCE HELANDER,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 20. . . . **HANS HOFMANN,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 20. . . . **LEE KRASNER,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays; through Jan. 27. . . . **LOREN MADSEN,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **RICHARD POUSETTE-DART,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **ROBERT RYMAN** and **ANTONI TÀPIES,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **CHRISTOPHER WILMARTH,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. Through Feb. 10.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Jo Baer—Sixties and early-seventies paintings by a second-string minimalist: accomplished, correct, and dourly elegant, but also rather boring—they lack the punch of contemporaneous work by Agnes Martin, Robert Mangold, and Brice Marden. Through Jan. 13. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

Francesco Clemente—A selection of oil paintings and works on paper from the eighties, by the leading Italian exponent of neo-expressionism. The images are unfailingly lovely, regardless of their outré subject matter (polymorphous sexuality, decapitation, vomiting, etc.). Through Jan. 27. (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

Chuck Close—New large-scale color and grisaille portraits of the artist and his friends (Roy Lichtenstein and Dorothea Rockburne, among others). Through Jan. 13. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St.)

Tom Sachs—"Cultural Prosthetics," an extravagantly weird mixed-medium installation by a young artist with a keen eye for sexy menace. Fashion and firearms are the leitmotivs. The exhibition's highlight: vitrines containing the artist's handmade, fully functional guns. Quentin Tarantino comes to the art world. Through Jan. 14. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

"A Child's World"—Paintings, sculptures, and photographs by Vincent Desiderio, Sally Mann, David Levinthal, Maxine Hayt, Susan Bee, and others. Through Jan. 13. (Arstark, 568 Broadway.)

Short List—**MARINA ABRAMOVIC,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **ALICE AYCOCK,** Weber, 142 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **LUTZ BACHER,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through Jan. 28. . . . **HANS-PETER FELDMANN,** 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **LUCIO FONTANA,** Gladstone, 99 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **ELLEN GALLAGHER,** Boone, 417 West Broadway. Through Feb. 24. . . . **STEPHEN GREENE,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **GEORGE HERMS,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through Jan. 27. . . . **JACQUELINE HUMPHRIES,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6; through Jan. 14. . . . **BRICE MARDEN,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6; through Jan. 14. . . . **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Through Feb. 17. . . . **GERHARD RICHTER,** Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **DAVID ROSE** and **JOHN DOHERTY,** Meisel, 141 Prince St. Through Jan. 27.

OTHER VENUES

"Serenissima: The Arts of Fashion in Venice"—This costume exhibit, one of the most spectacular in years, repays a long and attentive wander. Most of the garments date from the eighteenth century: fabulous Watteau-esque gowns and brocade waistcoats; ten-inch wooden platform shoes (two hundred years before the Bee Gees), inlaid with mother-of-pearl, for slogging through flooded piazzas; adorable children's slippers covered in petit point. The fans and reticules are little masterpieces—those Venetians knew how to accessorize. Period paintings illustrating various crafts and industries enliven the gallery walls. Though the show is a model of scholarship, the installation itself is strangely shabby, with the unfinished air of a construction-site hut. Through Jan. 20. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays; opens at noon on Saturdays.)

"Art, Design, and Barbie: The Evolution of a Cultural Icon"—The überdoll gets a valise's worth of makeovers here, from the likes of John Baldessari, Zaha Hadid, Kenny Scharf, Robert A. M. Stern, and Andy Warhol. Through Feb. 10. (Liberty Street Gallery, 225 Liberty St., at West St., Battery Park City. Opens Saturdays and Sundays at noon. For more information, call 945-0505.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

John Coplans—"Self Portrait: Frieze," a series of oversized nude torsos (the artist, as always) in groups of two, three, and four, which runs in a loose band around the gallery walls. Through Jan. 13. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Gerald Slota—Dark, blurred photographs, most of them containing more than one image (little girls' faces, say, or the shadows of hands which look like guns), with drawings scratched into their surfaces. Enigmatic and disturbing. Through Jan. 20. (Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St.)

"Frida Unmasked"—Portraits of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, taken by family members, close friends, and lovers, including Lola and Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Nickolas Muray, and Diego Rivera. Through Jan. 13. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St.)

"New York Stories"—Less familiar views of our metropolis, from the forties through the seventies, by Fritz Neugass, Fred Stein, Marvin Newman, David Attie, Simpson Kalisher, and Donald Blumberg. Through Jan. 13. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

"Shooting the Moon"—Lunar photography from 1850 to 1994, including glass plates, stereographs, daguerreotypes, and NASA images. Through Jan. 13. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"Eve Arnold: In Retrospect," black-and-white and color images from the photojournalist's forty-year career: politicians, diplomats, movie stars, religious leaders, artists, and musicians. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Country Beside Itself," Lars Tunbjörk's colorful, idiosyncratic exploration of Sweden's changing commercial and leisure pursuits. Through Feb. 11. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**RUDY BURCKHARDT,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 27. . . . **KEITH CARTER,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Jan. 20. . . . **HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON** and **TOSHIO SHIBATA,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE,** Wessel O'Connor, 60 Thomas St. Opens at noon; through Jan. 20. . . . **OSAMU KANEMURA,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **MICHIKO KON,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through March 2. . . . **EL LISSITZKY,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **CONSTANTINE MANOS,** Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Jan. 17. . . . **ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **GILLES PERESS,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Through Feb. 10.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

The Spice of Life

The variation is the simplest of classical music's principal structures. It must have been a compositional necessity: an unaltered melody grows less interesting with each repetition. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers probably used up more ink on variations than on any other genre, providing facile repertoire for instrumentalists whose own improvisatory skills fell short. At the other end of the spectrum stand those composers who cast some of their most profound utterances in variation form; think of Bach's "Vom Himmel Hoch" and "Goldberg" Variations, Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations, Mendelssohn's "Variations Sérieuses."

This week, concert halls will resound with variations. On January 13, at Carnegie Hall, the Orchestra of St. Luke's offers Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," the earliest of the composer's symphonic masterpieces. The "Variaciones Concertantes," a whimsical, Latin-flavored suite of eleven variations written in 1953 by the Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera, receives a rare performance, by the New York Chamber Symphony (January 13 and January 16, at the 92nd Street Y). And pianist Emanuel Ax gives a recital of nothing *but* variations (January 14, at Alice Tully Hall), in which he performs sets by Bach, Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms which demonstrate how the form could serve divergent "classical" styles, and also digs into twentieth-century terrain with Webern's fleeting Variations for Piano Solo and Copland's Piano Variations of 1930, a dense, crusty masterpiece of modernism.

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**DON GIOVANNI,** with Jane Eaglen, Patricia Schuman, Ruth Ann Swenson, Stanford Olsen, Thomas Hampson, and John Cheek; conducted by James Levine. (Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 13 at 1:30.) . . . **THE MAKROPULOS CASE,** by Janáček, with Jessye Norman, Graham Clark, Håkan Hagegård, and Donald McIntyre; David Robertson. In English. (Jan. 11 and Jan. 16 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT,** with Ghena Dimitrova, Veronica Villarroel, Michael Sylvester, and Dimitri Kavrakos; Nello Santi. (Jan. 12 and Jan. 15 at 8.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Mary Mills, Patricia Racette, Vladimir Grishko, and Haijing Fu; Carlo Rizzi. (Jan. 13 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

Bronx Opera—Michael Spierman conducts a fully staged production of Kirke Mechem's "Tartuffe." (John Jay Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. Jan. 12-13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 576-1370.)

"L'Incoronazione di Poppea"—Although Monteverdi composed more than a dozen operas, only three have survived. "L'Incoronazione di Poppea," written in 1643, was the last. In earthy, cynical tones, it tells the tale of the emperor Nero; his repudiated empress, Ottavia; his favored mistress, Poppea; and the philosopher Seneca (who is sentenced to die for choosing honesty instead of political intrigue). It's a cynical swan song in which lust and ambition triumph over reason and morality—the earliest operatic masterpiece with an inherently modern sensibility. This production, directed by Jonathan Miller and imported from Cooperstown's Glimmerglass Opera, features soprano Dana Hanchard, and countertenors Drew Minter and David Daniels. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Jan. 13 and Jan. 15 at 8. Through Jan. 21.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune," Rhapsody for Alto Saxophone (with

Kenneth Radnofsky), and "La Mer," as well as Ravel's "La Valse." In addition, the orchestra's principal flutist, Jeanne Baxtresser, plays Debussy's "Syrinx," for unaccompanied flute. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Jan. 11, Jan. 13, and Jan. 16, all at 8, and Jan. 12 at 2.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—Pianist Leon Fleisher performs Mozart's A-Major Concerto (K. 414), in his first New York appearance in several decades playing music for two hands. Also on this program, conducted by André Previn, is Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Haydn" and Beethoven's Symphony No. 4. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 13 at 8.)

New York Virtuoso Singers—Harold Rosenbaum directs a wide-ranging program that includes Clément Janequin's "La Guerre" and Barber's "Agnus Dei" (a choral arrangement of his celebrated Adagio for Strings). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Jan. 13 at 8.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Gerard Schwarz conducts Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes," the première of Augusta Read Thomas's "Seven Haiku for Piano and Orchestra," and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 13 at 8 and Jan. 16 at 7:30.)

BachWorks—Performing Bach's Cantata No. 82 ("Ich habe Genug"), "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 5, and C-Minor Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord. (St. Paul's Church, 315 W. 22nd St. Jan. 14 at 5. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

RECITALS

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—The Society concludes a weeklong Beethoven mini-festival. Jan. 10 at 6:15: Pianist David Golub and composer Bruce Adolphe discuss Beethoven's piano sonatas (with Mr. Golub performing the musical examples). . . . Jan. 11 at 6:15: Mr. Golub, cellist Gary Hoffman, and members of the Orion String Quartet consider performance-related issues involving the composer's music. (Rose Studio, Rose Building, tenth floor, Lincoln Center. For information, call 875-5788.) . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8: The Orion Quartet plays the Quartets in D Major (Op. 18, No. 3), E Minor (Op. 59, No. 2), and A Minor (Op. 132). (Alice Tully Hall.) . . . ¶ Jan. 13, from 10 A.M. until midnight: A Beethoven marathon, featuring tenor Robert White, violinist Mark Steinberg, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, among others. (Rose Studio. For information, call 875-5788.) . . . ¶ Jan. 14 at 5: Violinist Cho-Liang Lin and pianist André-Michel Schub perform Beethoven's Violin Sonatas No. 3, No. 9 (the "Kreutzer"), and No. 10. (Alice Tully Hall.)

Bargemusic—Violinist Christiaan Bor, cellist Nathaniel Rosen, and pianist Jeffrey Swann perform piano trios by Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2), Arensky, and Mendelssohn (in C Minor). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Jan. 11 at 7:30 and Jan. 14 at 4.)

Chopin Considered—A three-hour investigation of the composer's work, with pianist Garrick Ohlsson and author David Dubal. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Jan. 13 at 10 A.M. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Guarneri Quartet—The foursome plays quartets by Janáček (his Second, "Intimate Letters") and Schubert ("Death and the Maiden"), as well as Barber's "Dover Beach" (with baritone William Sharp). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 13 at 8.)

Chesapeake Chamber Players—The ensemble offers a concert of twentieth-century music, including works by Alfredo Casella, David Crumb (son of a famous composing father), and William Thomas McKinley, and premières of works by Russ Lombardi, Ji-Hoon Ahn, Eddie Phoon, and Gun Suk Lee. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 13 at 8:30.)

Emanuel Ax—The pianist performs the Bach/Busoni D-Minor Chaconne, Schubert's Impromptu in B-Flat Major, Copland's Piano Variations, Webern's Variations for Piano Solo (Op. 27), Chopin's "Variations Brillantes," and Brahms's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel." (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 14 at 2.)

Livia Sohn—Violinist, who at age eighteen is being billed as an ex-prodigy, performs sonatas by Beethoven (his First), Debussy, and Prokofiev (in D Major, Op. 94b). Pianist Robert Koenig assists. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Jan. 14 at 2.)

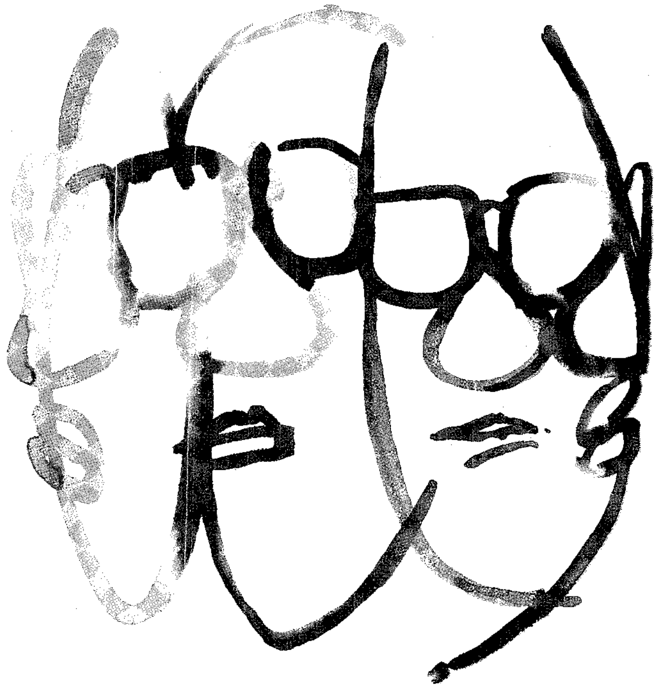
Ambrosia Trio—Performing piano trios by Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2) and Brahms (in B Major, Op. 8). (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Jan. 14 at 4. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

New York Camerata—The chamber ensemble, plus mezzo-soprano Mary Ann Hart, offers small-scale works by Telemann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Fauré, John Harbison, Seymour Barab, and Frank Bridge. (St. John's in the Village, 218 W. 11th St., at Waverly Pl. Jan. 14 at 4. For information about tickets, call 866-3459.)

Clamma Dale—Soprano, in a recital of Civil War-era songs. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 15 at 8.)

Marilyn Horne Foundation Concert—The renowned mezzo-soprano established a foundation two years ago to promote the art of the song. In this recital, singers who have received encouragement from the foundation—soprano Janet Williams, mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung, tenor Bruce Ford, and baritone Rodney Gilfry—join on their benefactor's birthday to perform songs by Mahler, Strauss, Debussy, and others. Pianists Thomas Bagwell, Warren Jones, and Brian Zeger assist. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 16 at 7:30.)

New York Festival of Song—Sopranos Harolyn Blackwell and Camellia Johnson and bass Arthur Woodley, with pianists Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, offer settings of poems by Langston Hughes, including songs by Weill, Zemlinsky, Elie Siegmeister, and Harry Burleigh. Hughes's biographer Arnold Rampersad will deliver a narration. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 16 at 8.)



Emanuel Ax plays variations, at Alice Tully Hall.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Honoring Dr. King—Events around the city mark what would have been the sixty-seventh birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Jan. 14 at 2: Sweet Honey in the Rock, the a-cappella quintet, appears in its annual children's concert. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. 274-1948.) . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 8: The Juilliard School presents an evening of gospel, dance, theatrical, and orchestral works. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

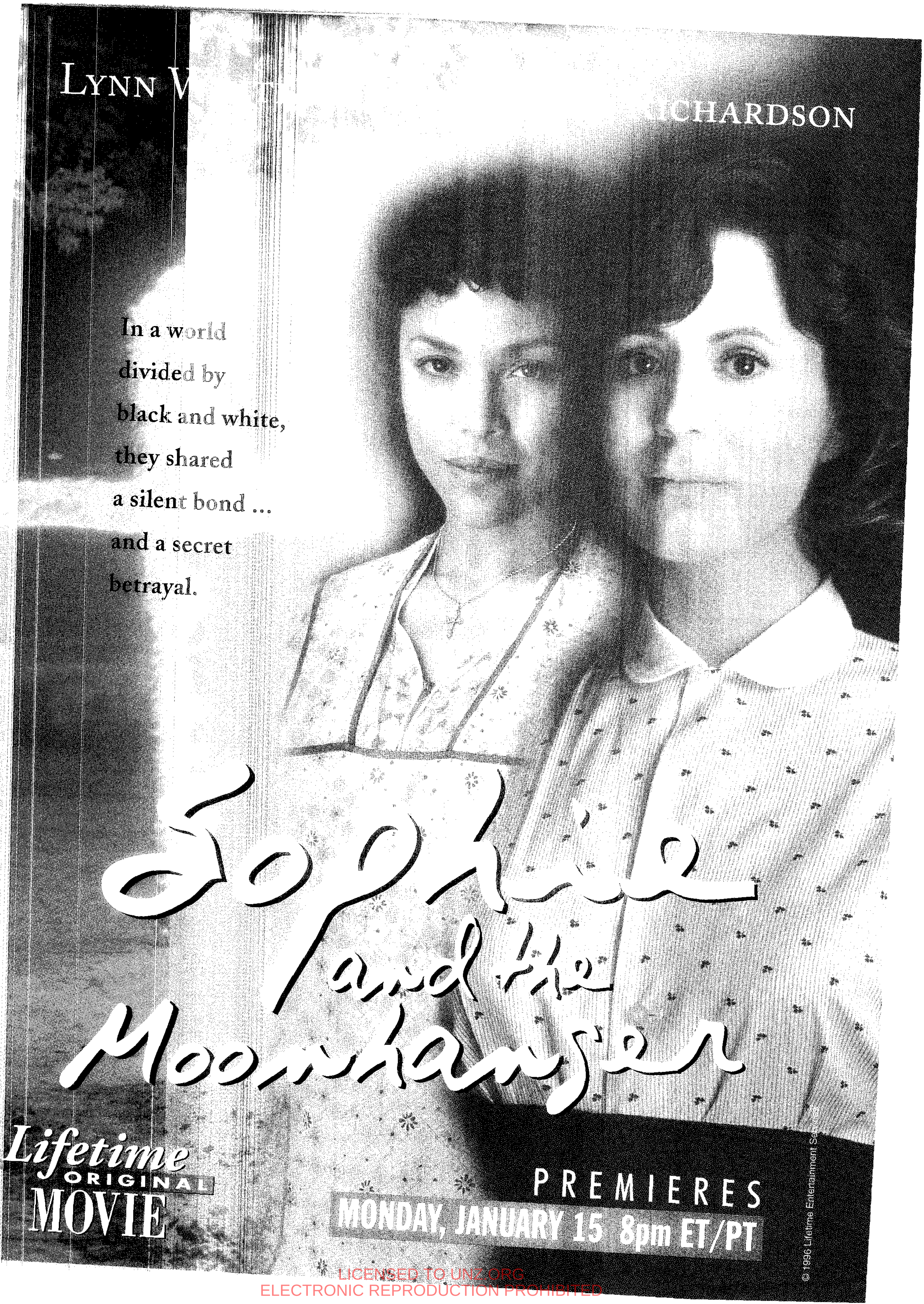
Summer Dreams—Didn't get that cabin cruiser you wanted for Christmas? Don't fret: at this year's New York National Boat Show, there are more than a thousand boats to choose from—everything from motor yachts, speedboats, and runabouts to inflatables and Jet-Skis. Novice mariners can check out the seminars for first-time boat buyers, clinics for aspiring anglers, and water-skiing tutorials. And those who are in a hurry shouldn't miss the Aquastrada Delta, an amphibious vehicle that can do a hundred miles an hour on land and forty-five on water. Cool. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. 307-7171. Jan. 10-12 from 1 to 9, Jan. 13 from 10 to 9, and Jan. 14 from 11 to 6.)

"The Hand of the Poet: Original Manuscripts by 100 Masters"—The manuscripts in this exhibit (Kipling's notebooks, Wilde's pen-and-ink epigrams, Pound's handwritten corrections on the typescript of Eliot's "The Waste Land") demonstrate the cliché that writing is about rewriting. The rest of the exhibit (a suicidal 1814 letter by a hospitalized and opium-addled Coleridge, the edition of "Leaves of Grass" that cost Whitman his job with the Department of the Interior, a photo of Robert Louis Stevenson with Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii, Lewis Carroll's dice and dice cups) demonstrates the complexity of the writing life. The juxtaposition of manuscripts and personal effects suggests Auden's homage to Blake: "inside each mortal thing / Its holy emanation sing." (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. Through April 27.)

Readings—Jan. 10 at 8: Beat poets Gregory Corso ("Long Live Man") and Herbert Huncke ("Guilty of Everything") read from their work. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ Jan. 12 at 8: Jamaica Kincaid reads from her new novel, "Autobiography of My Mother." (Books & Co., 939 Madison Ave., at 74th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talk—Jan. 16 at 7: The New York Film Salon discusses Oliver Stone's screen portrait of Presidential resignate Richard Nixon. (Learning Alliance Center, 324 Lafayette St. For more information, call 1-914 242-0919.)

Home Cooking—As 1995 ended, the Rangers were riding a two-month-long unbeaten streak on home ice. Now they're holding off the upstart Florida Panthers and the burly Philadelphia Flyers—the team that swept the Blueshirts in last year's playoffs—for the top spot in the Atlantic Division. Some credit the cool management of coach Colin Campbell, others the team's strong goaltending (though Mike Richter's recent injury is worrisome), and still others the beefed-up defense, anchored by Ulf Samuelsson, whom New York acquired from the Flyers after being out-toughed in the playoffs. But the main reason for the Rangers' success is the inspirational Mark Messier; he's flashing his speed and using his stick and throwing his body as if he weren't thirty-four but twenty-four, and the rest of the team is feeding off the captain's fervor. (For game information, call 465-6741.)



LYNN W

RICHARDSON

In a world
divided by
black and white,
they shared
a silent bond ...
and a secret
betrayal.

Sophie and the Moonhanger

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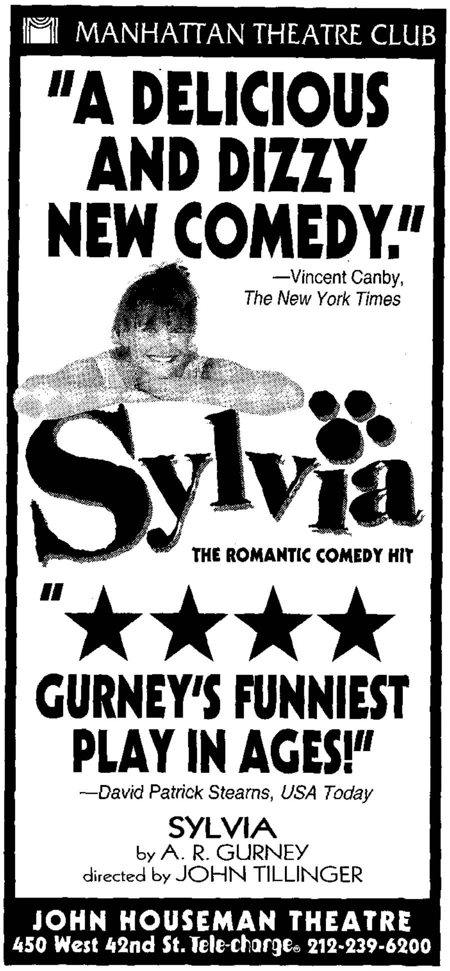
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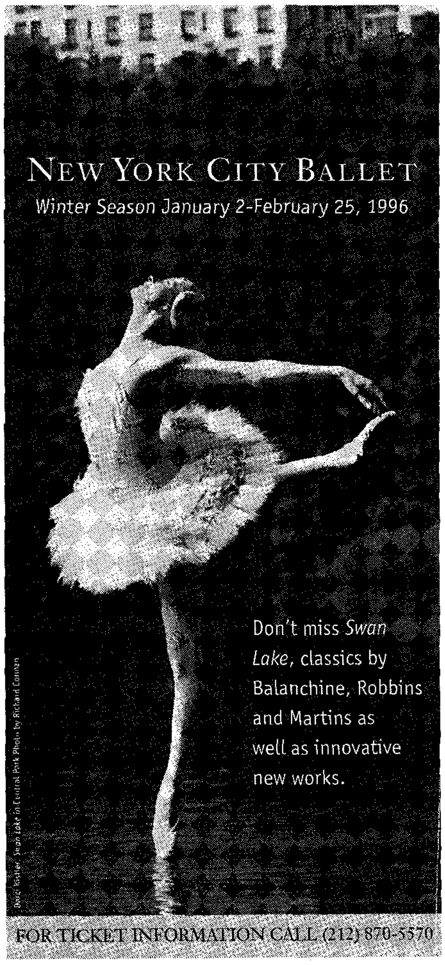
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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Bio-Dome—A comedy about two friends (Pauly Shore and Stephen Baldwin) who end up in an experimental environmentally controlled community when they mistake it for a shopping mall. Directed by Jason Bloom. Written by Kip Koenig and Scott Marcano. Opening January 12. (Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood—The two youngest Wayans brothers, Shawn and Marlon, appear in a spoof that they co-wrote with Phil Beauman. Paris Barclay directed. Opening January 12. (Embassy 1 and Embassy 2.)

Dunston Checks In—A comedy in which Jason Alexander plays a hotel manager whose guests include a thief (Rupert Everett) and his pet orangutan. Directed by Ken Kwapis. With Eric Lloyd, Paul Reubens, and Faye Dunaway. Written by John Hopkins, Eliot Wald, Andrew Kurtzman, and Bruce Graham. Opening January 12. (Village East Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin.)

Eye for an Eye—Sally Field stars as a mother seeking justice after her daughter's murderer (Kiefer Sutherland) is set free on a technicality, in a drama directed by John Schlesinger. Written by Amanda Silver and Rick Jaffa, from the 1993 novel by Erika Holzer. Opening January 12. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

French Twist—Josiane Balasko's romantic comedy about a love triangle involving two women and a man. In French. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening January 12. (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Lawnmower Man II: Beyond Cyberspace—Matt Frewer stars in the sequel to the 1992 thriller about life in virtual reality, written and directed by Farhad Mann. Opening January 12. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Once Upon a Time . . . When We Were Colored—Tim Reid's adaptation of the 1989 book by Clifton Taulbert, about growing up in Mississippi in the forties and fifties, stars Al Freeman, Jr., Phylicia Rashad, and Leon. Written by Paul W. Cooper. Opening January 12.

Two If by Sea—Denis Leary and Sandra Bullock star as petty-criminal lovers turned art thieves, in a comedy directed by Bill Bennett. Co-written by Leary and Mike Armstrong. Opening January 12.

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 22.)

Balto—This animated feature, based on the true story of a husky who defied the elements to deliver medicine to his diphtheria-ridden Alaskan town, is one of the better efforts to come out of Amblin Studios. The beautiful winter scenery (unfussily drawn, with stirring colors), the theme of courage and honesty in the face of adversity, and the low-key humor of the characters (Balto's friends include a snow goose and two polar bears) give the picture a simple charm. No rip-roaring excitement here, just the modest pleasures of a nice children's film.—B.D. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square.)

The City of Lost Children—Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's nightmarish adult fantasy deserves a place beside such phantasmagorical film wonders as "Metropolis" and "Batman," but (like "Metropolis") it's a cold piece of work. The succession of dazzling images grows tiresome as the plot—about a man who steals the dreams of children—wanders aimlessly. The enterprise has a strongly Dickensian feel, complete with orphans on cobblestone streets, but it's as though the filmmakers had mined "Oliver Twist" for the set design and forgotten to tell the story. In French.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Cutthroat Island—Director Renny Harlin's high-seas adventure has some good things going for it: Geena Davis makes a swashbucklingly alluring pirate, and the megabudget provides huge explosions. But this plot-heavy rollick is as badly constructed and overwhelmingly inflated as Spielberg's "Hook." Harlin's earlier films, "Die Hard 2" and "Cliffhanger," had their fair share of muscular action, and he doesn't disappoint here: his winds blow and his seas roil. Matthew Modine, though—with whom Davis is teamed in a race for hidden treasure—is less than inspired. The movie gamely attempts to capture the fire of the old Errol Flynn pictures, but it's harsh and imposing, and there's no romance to it.—B.D. (Manhattan Twin and Criterion Center.)

Dead Man Walking—Tim Robbins's blunt, powerful movie tells the story of a murderer (Sean Penn) awaiting execution and a nun (Susan Sarandon) trying to save his soul—and, if possible, his skin. The filmmaker clearly hopes that familiarity with the grisly realities of capital punishment will finally breed contempt for the idea of premeditated, state-sponsored killing. And although the picture sometimes turns clunky and flat, as if it were sagging under the weight of its good intentions, it winds up being devastatingly effective. Ultimately, the movie's power to persuade depends less on the shock of spectacle than on the shock of recognition that viewers must feel as they watch a human being prepare himself for death. Penn has to reveal, within a reckless and apparently despicable character, a salvageable soul, and he makes the erratic rhythm of the condemned man's spiritual progress seem effortless and natural: he captures the languid, insinuating tempo of grace invading a locked-up spirit. Also with Robert Prosky. Robbins's screenplay is based on a 1993 memoir by Sister Helen Prejean.—T.R. (1/8/96) (19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Dracula: Dead and Loving It—In Mel Brooks's latest, Dracula (Leslie Nielsen) travels to England, where he preys on two voluptuous women until a brilliant metaphysician-gynecologist (Brooks) figures out what he's up to and hunts him down. The staler the material Brooks takes on, the more eccentric and downright bad the acting ought to be. But Nielsen isn't enough of a ham, and the rest of the cast (which includes Peter MacNicol, Lysette Anthony, and Steven Weber) is lethally professional. The exception is that champion silly actor Harvey Korman; here he seriously overdoes a quivering British accent.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; through Jan. 11.)

Father of the Bride Part II—A remake of "Father's Little Dividend" (1951), in which Dad (Steve Martin), struggles to deal with the simultaneous pregnancies of Mom (Diane Keaton) and their happily married daughter (Kimberly Williams). Aside from Keaton, who is warm and subtly hilarious, the most compelling players are table settings, floral arrangements, and Dad's sleek black convertible. With Martin Short as a fey party consultant. Written by Nancy Meyers and Charles Shyer; directed by Shyer.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Jan. 11. . . . ¶ Embassy 4; starting Jan. 12.)

Four Rooms—All empty. In these four stories, set in a hotel and directed by Allison Anders, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, and Quentin Tarantino, the humor is sophomoric and repetitive, and some of the actors—Madonna, Tim Roth, Lili Taylor, Jennifer Beals—turn in self-parodying performances that are among the worst of their careers. Only Rodriguez's segment, with Antonio Banderas as a suave gangster who needs a babysittter for his Addams Family-like children, holds even mild interest. This movie is a collection of vanity projects directed by a bunch of people who were told they were cool once too often. They could all use a good slap at the box office.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, Gemini, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 2; through Jan. 11. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; starting Jan. 12.)

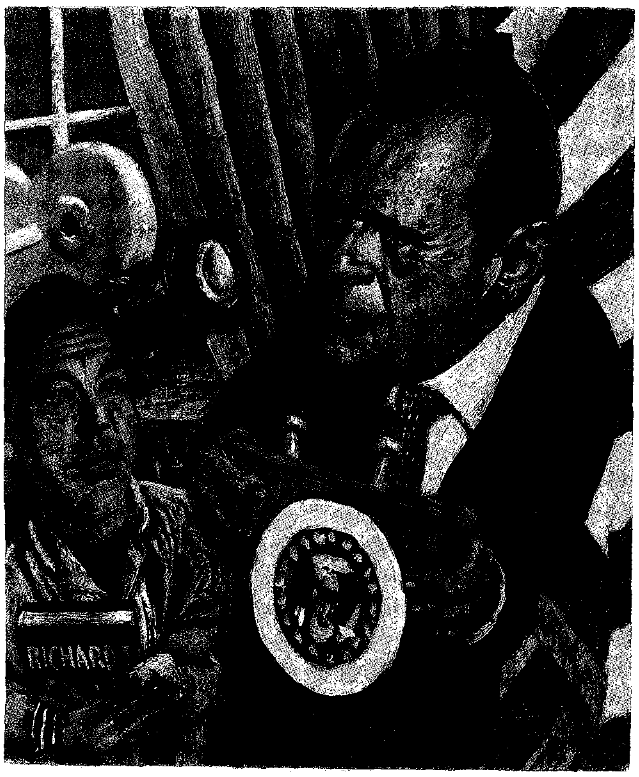
Grumpier Old Men—Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau reprise their roles as curmudgeonly neighbors in this sequel to their 1993 surprise hit. This time screenwriter Mark Steven Johnson forgoes the crude "Road Runner" style of the earlier film, giving the grumps more innuendos than insults to trade. Ann-Margret returns as Lemmon's earthy, loving wife. And Sophia Loren, as the owner of a restaurant that may ruin the boys' favorite fishing spot, is a fabulous date for Matthau. Their courtship is the plot's main concern, and although the material is mediocre at best, Matthau is a master at giving comic spins to dreary lines.—B.D. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Heat—Incredibly cool characters pull off violent yet debonair crimes in the heart of a supermodern American city: yes, it's a Michael Mann film. The moving spirit behind "Miami Vice" has turned his attention to Los Angeles, where an anguished cop (Al Pacino) goes head-to-head with a troubled villain (Robert De Niro). The movie looks happiest at night, but the feline grace of the camera's moves is betrayed by the portentous script; Diane Venora, as the detective's wife, has some particularly gruesome lines to deliver. The film, which runs on and on for nearly three hours, yearns to be much more than a thriller—it wants to diagnose the sickness of men's souls and convey the nobility of their pain. The irony is that *as* a thriller it works just fine; the set pieces, including an unstoppable gun battle outside a bank, are adrenaline dreams. The taciturn De Niro and the braying Pacino share a flawless scene over a cup of coffee, but the real honors go to Val Kilmer and Ashley Judd as a warring, loving couple. Kilmer can blow you away, with or without a gun.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Jumanji—Just the kind of blithe, accelerated nonsense that we need after the holidays. The title refers to an ancient board game with groovy powers; Robin Williams plays Alan, who was sucked into the Jumanji board as a boy and emerges twenty-six years later when a couple of kids (Kirsten Dunst and Bradley Pierce) open up the game and roll the dice. Cue all manner of special effects: spiders the size of hubcaps, elephants in the hallway. There's a touch of Spielberg in the way the director, Joe Johnston, makes these images work dramatically. He gets full comic mileage out of his monkeys and mosquitoes, but he rarely lets them swamp the actors. Williams seems, thank heaven, to be pulling out of his weepy, puffy period. Bonnie Hunt has a pleasing turn as a fey psychic; Jonathan Hyde is cast both as Alan's father and as his murderous nemesis inside the game—a neat, "Wizard of Oz"-like twist. The movie takes time to warm up, it weakens into soppiness at the end, and the game itself, if you think it through, makes very little sense. Most of the time, however, you don't have to think at all.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Lamerica—A drama by Gianni Amelio, about an Italian con man in post-Communist Albania. In Italian. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Nixon—Oliver Stone's three-hours-plus biography of Tricky Dick (Anthony Hopkins) is, like its subject, awkward, sweaty, tenacious, and highly impeachable. As usual, the filmmaker has big ideas about the forces that have shaped recent American history: this Nixon is the helpless, sporadically conscience-stricken pawn of a sinister right-wing cabal that was responsible for Vietnam and, of course, the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Where does Stone find this stuff—in pumpkin patches? You could shell out seven or eight bucks at the multiplex and accept Stone's frivolous speculations as solemn truth. But it would be wrong. Also with Joan Allen (as Pat Nixon), James Woods (as H. R. Haldeman), and David Hyde Pierce (as John Dean).—T.R. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema I, Cinema II, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)



Oliver Stone and Anthony Hopkins, the director and the star of "Nixon."

JARRET HUDDLESTON

Othello—Oliver Parker's version of Shakespeare's tragedy—the first filmed "Othello" in which the Moor of Venice is played by a black actor (Laurence Fishburne)—follows the familiar-quotations principle of Shakespearean adaptation. By sacrificing the volcanic flow of language that conveys Othello's pride, confusion, and anguish, the movie leaves Fishburne stranded: his performance is mysteriously uncharismatic. Kenneth Branagh, who plays Iago, has a surer grasp of Shakespearean technique, and his bold, confident interpretation manages to cut through the muddle that Parker has made of the play. With Irene Jacob as Desdemona.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Paris.)

Restoration—Michael Hoffman's film starts in the year 1660, when, as a caption informs us, "Charles II was restored to the throne and England awoke." It takes moviemaking on a scale such as this to put England firmly back to sleep; the film is long, resplendent, and dead. The most suggestive scene comes within the first ten minutes, when a young doctor named Merivel (Robert Downey, Jr.) places his hand on the beating heart of a living man. The pulse then slows as we follow Merivel through his epicurean excesses at court, his purgative sojourn among the Quakers, his selfless struggle against the plague, and his own restoration to royal favor. Downey kicks hard to keep the story going, but Hoffman's pacing is so weird and willful (he tends to interrupt scenes before you know what's going on) that your interest slumps irrevocably. The sets and costumes are a dream, but the performers—Sam Neill as the ineffectual king, Meg Ryan as an Irish madwoman (i.e., a woman with a screwy voice and unbrushed hair), and Hugh Grant as a foppish painter—are given no room to breathe; only David Thewlis, playing Merivel's Quaker colleague, delivers any real pathos. All in all, a boost to the Cromwellian cause.—A.L. (68th St. Playhouse.)

Richard III—A version set in the twentieth century, directed by Richard Loncraine and starring Ian McKellen as Shakespeare's vicious monarch. (Village East Cinemas and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

Sabrina—Sydney Pollack's rehash of the Billy Wilder comedy, scripted this time by Barbara Benedek and David Rayfiel, both updates and downgrades the original, running dangerously low on style and completely short of fun. The role that Audrey Hepburn made famous goes to Julia Ormond, who looks fabulous enough but doesn't strike sparks off anyone; the two Larrabee brothers, who vie alternately for Sabrina's affection, are played by Harrison Ford (as Linus the lump) and Greg Kinnear (as David the swell). What laughs there are blow in from the supporting roles: Sabrina's father (John Wood), the elder Mrs. Larrabee (Nancy Marchand), and Linus's secretary (Dana Ivey). If you arrive half an hour late, you'll manage to miss the early Parisian scenes, which are unspeakable.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Tower East, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Astor Plaza; through Jan. 11.)

Sense and Sensibility—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) If the picture pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Coronet, and Lincoln Square.)

Sudden Death—Yet another crib from the "Die Hard" blueprint, this one set in a hockey arena during the Stanley Cup playoffs and starring Jean-Claude Van Damme. Powers Boothe is the heavy, who organizes his men to hold the visiting Vice-President for ransom, and Van Damme kicks lots of butt (none as magnificent as his) to save the day. The editing is rapid, and the action sequences deliver the goods. This project won't make Van Damme the superstar he wants to be, but it does make the notion at least entertainable—he comes off as a handsomer (and warmer) Stallone. Economically directed, with the appropriate goofiness, by Peter Hyams.—B.D. (34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Toy Story—A team effort by the computer-animation company Pixar and Disney. The easy-to-follow screenplay, about the rivalry between two toys—cowboy Woody and spaceman Buzz Lightyear—should excite young children; teen-agers and parents can enjoy the brilliantly executed action sequences. The filmmakers have gotten around the coldness of so much computer animation by using the warm and friendly voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen. Yes, it's a come-on for Disney products, but all their children's films are about marketing; at least this one—unlike "Pocahontas"—has some zip.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

12 Monkeys—In Terry Gilliam's thriller, set in the twenty-first century, Bruce Willis travels back in time in order to save humanity from a deadly virus. (34th St. East, Beekman, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Waiting to Exhale—Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, and Lela Rochon star in Forest Whitaker's adaptation of Terry McMillan's 1992 novel. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Gotham Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Wild Reeds—André Téchiné's coming-of-age drama, set in a quiet provincial town in 1962, is the best French film in years. The young characters are all deeply confused about their political, intellectual, and sexual identities; the director sets up their conflicts with masterly ease, and, using smooth, complex tracking shots, carries them toward resolutions that are tentative but real. The movie flows like a river. Téchiné simply takes his characters from one point to another—from juvenile ignorance to a place where they can see themselves, and others, a little more clearly—and he makes that short journey look momentous. Few movies dealing with teen-agers have been so accurate about the moral and emotional urgency of adolescents' attempts to understand their lives, or so forgiving of their failures. In French.—T.R. (7/31/95) (Quad Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT (reviewed in our issue of 11/20/95): Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Baronet, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center. . . . **THE BROTHERS MC MULLEN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CARRINGTON** (11/27/95): Quad Cinema and Angelika 57. . . . **CASINO** (12/4/95): First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, and National Twin. . . . **COPYCAT** (11/13/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE CROSSING GUARD:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CRUMB** (5/1/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **DELTA OF VENUS:** Cinema Village. . . . **GEORGIA** (12/11/95): Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **GET SHORTY** (10/23/95): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **GOLDENEYE** (11/27/95): Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . **LEAVING LAS VEGAS** (11/6/95): Village East Cinemas and Plaza. . . . **MIGHTY APHRODITE** (10/30/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **A MONTH BY THE LAKE:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **NICO ICON:** Film Forum. . . . **PERSUASION** (9/25/95): Quad Cinema and Cinema 3. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Eastside Cinema, Quad Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **SHANGHAI TRIAD:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **TO DIE FOR:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TOM AND HUCK:** Village East Cinemas, Sutton, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Embassy 4. . . . **TO WONG FOO, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, JULIE NEWMAR** (9/11/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WHEN NIGHT IS FALLING:** Angelika Film Center.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Plaza, 42 E. 58th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Baronet and Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini 1 and 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
Tower East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Olympia 1 and II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

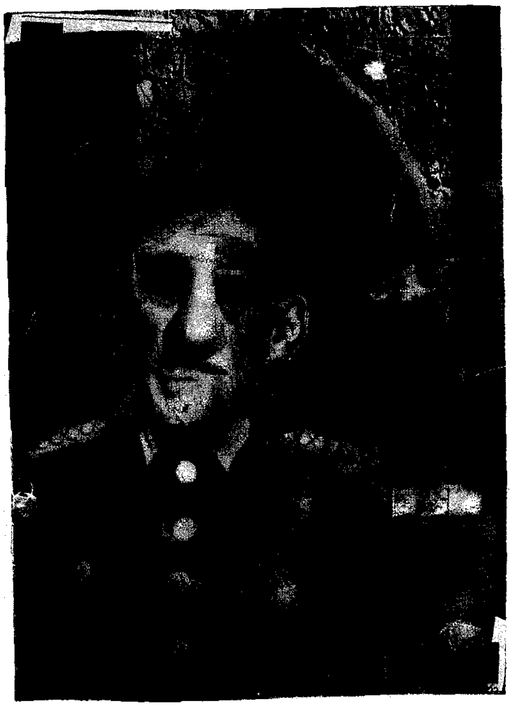
The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (1978)—In this great Australian film, taken from Thomas Keneally's novel, the director, Fred Schepisi, dramatizes the inability of the displaced Europeans at the turn of the century to understand the aborigines who live in the remnants of a tribal society. Jimmie Blacksmith is a half-caste who is taught by a Methodist minister; he grows up determined to escape the debased existence of aborigines in their hovels by working hard, buying land, and, as the minister's wife has advised him, marrying a nice white girl off a farm. The film is the grotesque, explosive comedy-tragedy of what happens to this young man; trying to improve himself, he's like a hair-raisingly foolish cross between Jude the Obscure and Gunga Din. When he rebels, it's out of helplessness and frustration. He doesn't wage war directly against the men; he attacks the men's most prized possessions—their robust, well-fed women, their pink-and-white children. With Tommy Lewis as Jimmie, and Freddy Reynolds as laughing Mort, his aborigine half brother, a loyal, easygoing bum in ragged tweeds who makes us understand what the Europeans have destroyed. This is a large-scale film—a visually impassioned epic.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 14-15.)

Life of Brian (1979)—An arid Monty Python spoof of a reluctant messiah in the New Testament era; the aura of the common room weighs heavy on the lampoons of Judaic and Roman law and of militant revolutionary groups like the Peoples Front of Judea. The humor is either too remote or too much like late-night TV. The low-comic highlights include Michael Palin's Pontius Pilate, done in a Babwa Wawa accent, and the climactic number by a crucified chorus, "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life." Directed by Terry Jones, with animation and design by Terry Gilliam.—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 13.)

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)—The Python troupe's most inspired movie is also one of the funniest films of the seventies. This travesty of Arthurian legend has something the majority of latter-day medieval epics lack: an air of spontaneous invention. King Arthur (Graham Chapman) canters through magical landscapes in schoolyard fashion—his hands miming reins, his feet approximating the stately lope of hooves—while his attendant, Patsy (Terry Gilliam), smacks coconuts together to get the required clippity-clop. The coconuts (an homage to the Marx Brothers?) set the tone for the whole affair, which brashly mixes parodies of knightly quests (John Cleese, as Lancelot, decimates a wedding party in a delusion of gallantry) with madcap inventions like a Trojan rabbit and some freshly minted Gallic insults ("I fart in your general direction"). There's too much postmodern doodling near the end; otherwise, the roistering and jousting give the Pythons' smarty-pants vaudeville a baggy-pants charge. Directed by the Terrys Jones and Gilliam.—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 13.)

Monty Python's The Meaning of Life (1983)—A scattershot sketch comedy, with the Pythons offering apocalyptic updates of music-hall jibes at English social and religious hypocrisy. This time out there's less juice in their attacks than there is gore and vomit. But they do provide the usual redeeming production number: a neo-"Oliver!" showstopper set to a pro-life anthem, "Every Sperm Is Sacred." Terry Jones directed.—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 14.)

Shame (1988)—This blunt thriller smothers its town-hiding-a-secret hook with the heavy ominousness of Australian art-house hits; one wag dubbed it "Bad Day at Hanging Rock." At the start, motorcycle trouble strands a lawyer in the hamlet of Giborak.



Ian McKellen in "Richard III."

ALAIN PILON

Her leather-girl attire and attitude challenge the town's trashy single males. When her mechanic turns out to be the father of a rape victim, you wait for the lawyer to become Mad Maxine and wreak vengeance on a society that equates sexual assault with sowing wild oats. Instead, she gets the townswomen to stand shoulder to shoulder—but the film is still a crude melodrama. Like the mothers and fathers of Giborak's coddled, overheated boys, it waffles between seeing rape as violence and seeing it as part of the hormonal acting-out of adolescence. With Deborra-Lee Furness as the heroine; Steve Jodrell directed Beverley Blankenship and Michael Brindley's script. (Remade as a 1992 TV movie starring Amanda Donohoe.)—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 12 and Jan. 14.)

SWEETIE (1990)—The first theatrical feature by the New Zealand-born, Australia-based director Jane Campion is relentlessly irritating. Saying "I'm destined to be with you," Kay (Karen Colston) corrals Louis (Tom Lycos) just fifty minutes after he's gotten engaged to another woman—a fortune-teller has told Kay that a man with a question mark is in her future, and Louis has a drooping forelock that seems to fit the bill. He plants a tree in her back yard to symbolize their love; Kay dreams that it grows into a monstrous plant; the pair settles into sexual inertia. Enter Sweetie (Genevieve Lemon), Kay's overweight, out-of-control sister—the id. Dorothy Barry and Jon Darling, as the sisters' parents, complete the schematic diagram of a dysfunctional family. To add to the chilly perversity, there is native Australian choral music; it brings an aboriginal je ne sais quoi to the spectacle of repressed and crazy white people. Campion co-wrote the script with Gerard Lee.— M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 12-13.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2 AND 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** Films directed by Paul Morrissey. Through Jan. 12: "Heat" (1972). . . . Jan. 13-16: "Women in Revolt" (1972). . . . **THEATRE 3:** Films directed by Satyajit Ray; all in Bengali, with English subtitles. Jan. 10 and Jan. 12-14: "Pather Panchali" (1955), "Aparajito" (1958), and "The World of Apu" (1959). . . . Jan. 11: "Devi" (1960), "Charulata" (1964), and "Two Daughters" (1961). . . . Jan. 15: "The Middleman" (1975), "The Music Room" (1959), and "Big City" (1963). . . . Jan. 16: "The Music Room," "Pather Panchali," and "Devi."

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films from Australia. Jan. 11 at 2:30 and Jan. 16 at 6: "For the Term of His Natural Life" (1927, Norman Dawn; silent). . . . Jan. 11 at 6: "Bingo Bridesmaids and Braces" (1989, Gillian Armstrong). . . . Jan. 11 at 8 and Jan. 16 at 2:30: "Bad Boy Bubby" (1993, Rolf de Heer). . . . Jan. 12 at 2:30 and Jan. 14 at 2: "Shame" (†). . . . Jan. 12 at 6 and Jan. 13 at 2: "Sweetie" (†). . . . Jan. 12 at 8: "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" (1994, Stephan Elliott). . . . Jan. 13 and Jan. 15 at 5: "The Last Wave" (1977, Peter Weir). . . . Jan. 14 at 5 and Jan. 15 at 2: "The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith" (†). . . . Jan. 15 at noon: "The Fringe Dwellers" (1986, Bruce Beresford). . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 3 and 6: "Cancer in Two Voices" (1993, Lucy Massie Phenix) and "Our Mom's a Dyke" (1995, Juliette Olavarria). . . . ¶ Silent films directed by William Wyler. Jan. 12 at 6:30 and Jan. 14 at 2:30: "Hell's Heroes" (1930). . . . Jan. 13 at 3 and Jan. 14 at 5: "The Stolen Ranch" (1926). . . . Jan. 13-14 at 5: "The Love Trap" (1929). . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 2:30: "The Projectionist" (1971, Harry Hurwitz). . . . ¶ Jan. 15 at 5: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Films by Bernardo Bertolucci. Jan. 10 at 2 and 8:45: "The Last Emperor" (1987). . . . Jan. 10 at 6 and Jan. 11 at 2 and 8:30: "Little Buddha" (1994). . . . Jan. 11 at 6 and Jan. 12 at 2: "The Sheltering Sky" (1990). . . . ¶ The Fifth Annual New York Jewish Film Festival. Jan. 13 at 8:30, Jan. 14 at 6:15, and Jan. 15 at 4:45: "Long Is the Road" (1940, Herbert B. Fredersdorf and Marek Goldstein). . . . Jan. 14 and Jan. 16 at 2: "Yaacov Ben Dov: Father of the Hebrew Film" (1993, Yaacov Gross) and "The Yellow Ticket" (1918, Victor Janson; silent). . . . Jan. 14 at 4 and Jan. 15 at 8:45: "All That Really Matters" (1992, Robert Glinski; in Polish). . . . Jan. 14 at 8:30 and Jan. 15 at 2: "Hidden Children" (1994, John Walker) and "Loving the Dead" (1991, Mira Hamermesh). . . . Jan. 15 at 6:30: "Under the Domim Tree" (1995, Eli Cohen; in Hebrew). . . . Jan. 16 at 4:10: "One Survivor Remembers" (1995, Kary Antholis) and "So We Said Goodbye" (1991, Jorge Gurvich). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Jan. 13 at 2: "King Solomon's Mines" (1950, Compton Bennett and Andrew Marton).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Jan. 13 at 3: "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" (†). . . . Jan. 13 at 5: "Life of Brian" (†). . . . Jan. 14 at 2: "Jabberwocky" (1977, Terry Gilliam). . . . Jan. 14 at 4: "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life" (†).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 14 at 7, the feature will be "Gloria" (1980, John Cassavetes), with Gena Rowlands.

WHITNEY MUSEUM, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-65." Jan. 10 at 1:30 and Jan. 11 at 2:30: Short films by Harry Smith, James Whitney, Jordan Belson, and Bruce Baillie. . . . Jan. 12-14 at 1:30: "Burroughs: The Movie" (1983, Howard Brookner) and "Towers Open Fire/The Cut-Ups/Bill and Tony/William Buys a Parrot" (1962-72, Anthony Balch). . . . ¶ Films by Robert Frank. Jan. 10 at 4, Jan. 11 at 6:30, and Jan. 12-14 at 4: "Life Dances On . . ." (1980) and "Energy and How to Get It" (1981, Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer, and Gary Hill).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—James Dean's television appearances. Through Jan. 14: "Harvest" (1953).

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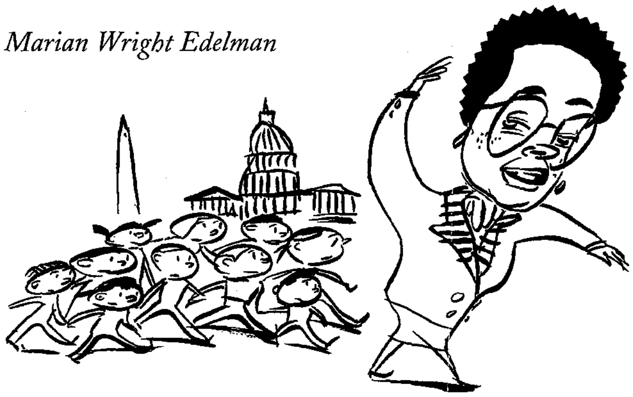
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

CHILDREN OF A LESSER COUNTRY

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN, this country's most effective and passionate advocate for children, is never at a loss for words—words, numbers, and meticulously documented information are her stock-in-trade—but the implications of the current congressional battle over welfare "reform" are beyond even her capacity to rationalize them. "I've never used the word 'evil' in all my years in Washington, but what's going on down here is really quite evil," she said recently, in her cluttered, cheerful office at the Children's Defense Fund, a few blocks from the Capitol. "They're proposing to cut two hundred and fifty billion dollars from programs for poor children, poor families, disabled children—and it's not even to balance the budget! It's to give a two-hundred-and-forty-five-billion-dollar tax cut to the non-needy. The cuts they're talking about are six or seven times worse than the cuts we had in the Reagan years. The Republican radicals are trying to eradicate the role of the federal government as a protector of last resort for children and the poor, and for ordinary people during a recession. This is a major attack on government—what I call an ideological coup d'état—without any consideration for its actual consequences. I have never seen less attention paid to facts or the truth."

Marian Wright Edelman

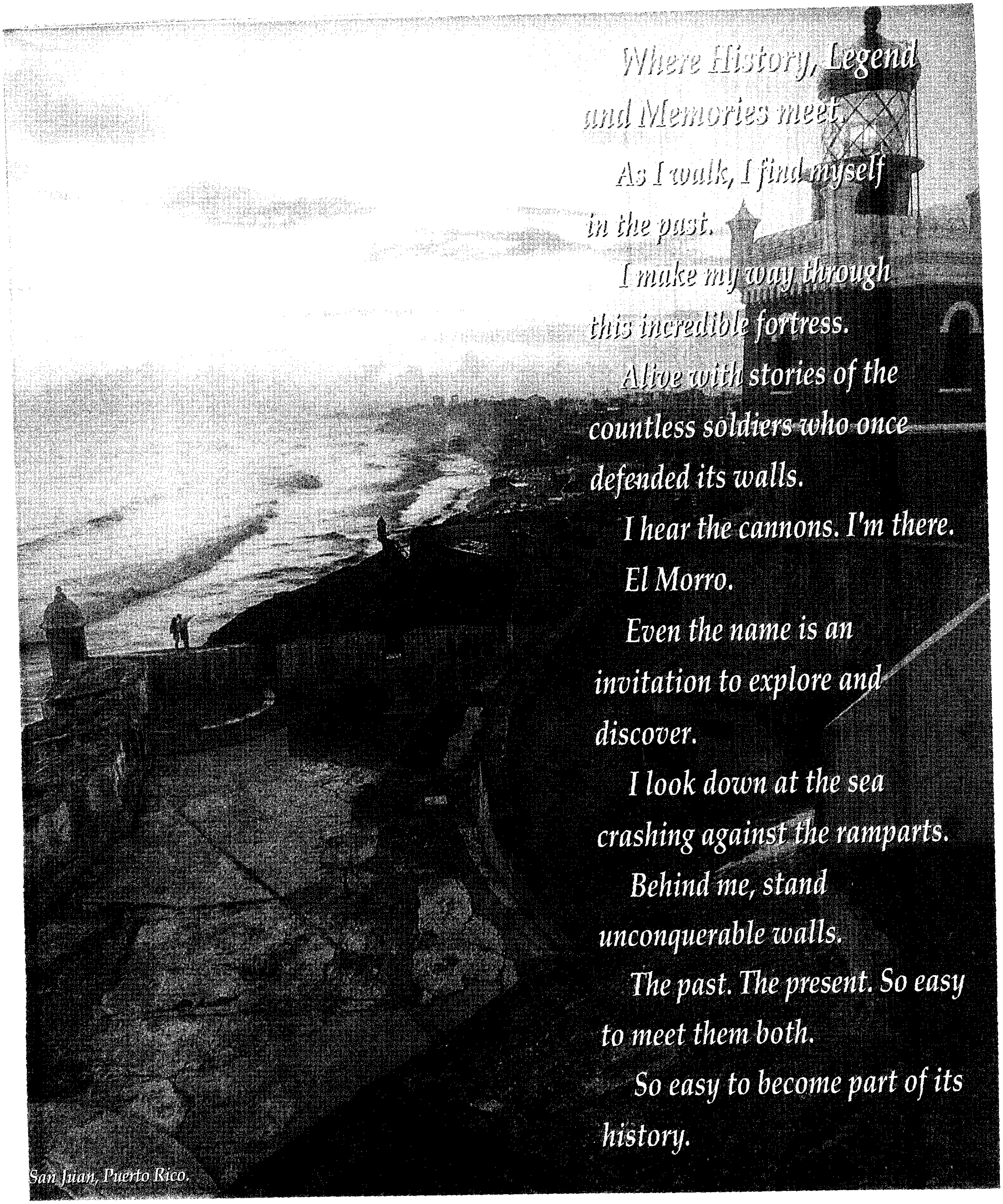


What makes the legislative assault still more mind-boggling to Edelman is the fact that until quite recently it had evoked so little response from President Clinton, her close friend and sometime ally. She and her husband, Peter Edelman, who is a senior official with the Department of Health and Human Services, have known the Clintons for many years. Hillary Clinton worked for the Children's Defense Fund as a law student, as a lawyer, as a board member, and, finally, as chairman of the board, until her First Lady status obliged her to resign. Ever since President Clinton opened the door to the Republican demolition squad with his campaign pledge to "end welfare as we know it," though, Edelman has become increasingly dismayed by his failure to hold the line on the health, nutrition, and income safety net for children. "I was horrified," she said. "I couldn't believe it. Because this President of all Presidents knows what it will mean. He knows those block grants are Trojan horses for massive cuts, and that most states are no more ready to run these programs than the man in the moon. There are fifteen million children living in poverty in this country today, and Office of Management and Budget figures show that the so-called welfare-reform plan would push 1.2 million more of them into poverty. To say nothing of the proposed cuts in Medicaid and the loss of private health insurance, which, seven years from now, would leave nineteen million children with no health insurance. No other industrialized nation has dreamed of letting its children go without basic levels of nutrition or medical care. When it comes to protecting our children, this is now an underdeveloped nation. We've been negotiating with the White House for the past year on these issues. I try always to separate personal relationships from policy and politics, but it's been extraordinarily difficult."

EDELMAN broke publicly with the White House in November, publishing a stinging open letter to Clinton in the Washington *Post*. "What a tragic irony it would be for this regressive attack on children and the poor to occur on your watch," she wrote. "For me, this is the defining moral litmus test of your presidency. . . . It is moral hypocrisy for our nation to slash income, health and nutrition assistance for poor children while leaving untouched hundreds of billions in corporate welfare, giving new tax breaks of over $200 billion to non-needy citizens, and giving the Pentagon almost $7 billion it did not request." Since then Edelman has had no more official discussions with the White House. The President is now promising to veto any legislation that would harm children, though, and Edelman considers this an encouraging, if sadly belated, response.

As the debate over the budget drags on, Edelman's organization is fighting a furious rear-guard action on Capitol Hill. More legislators seem to be listen-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



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ing, and the prospects, she feels, look a little less dire at the moment than they did a month ago. But Edelman now believes that professional and intelligent advocacy is no longer enough. "It is very clear to me that we will never, ever get done what needs to be done unless we build a movement," she said. "We're going to have a march. We're going to mobilize as many people and groups as we can to come to Washington in the spring. It's time for mothers, frankly, and fathers if they want to come along, and grandmothers and grandfathers and nurturers and caregivers and religious leaders to come and say to these people in power in an election year that hurting children is morally and politically unacceptable. You know, I travel around a lot, and I don't think I've ever seen more people who are aware that something fundamental has come loose in this country. What in the world has happened to us, that we've become so numb, so spiritually dead? Our children are dying like flies. A child dies from guns every ninety-eight minutes in this country, and from poverty every fifty-three minutes, and from child abuse every seven hours. Is there one shred of evidence that punishing children will change the behavior of parents? I am sick and tired of begging people not to hurt children. That's why we've got to do this march. I mean, you've just finally got to say *all right,* you people who care about kids, all two of you or all two million or all two hundred million of you, it's time to stop hurting children, because it is destroying our country. So we will see what happens."

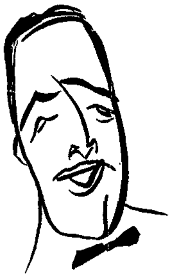
EARL AND THE DUKE

UPTOWN on a recent winter night, in the shambles of cultural greatness that is Harlem, musicians and friends gathered to memorialize Earl Coleman, the superb crooner, with fire and style. There was sorrow in the air and there was swing and there was lyric magnificence. That was assured by Sonny Rollins, Etta Jones, Houston Person, Danny Knight, Bertha Hope, Mike Abene, and Jerry Dodgion, all backed by the bass of Bob Cranshaw and the drums of Leroy Williams.

Coleman, whose most famous recording was "This Is Always," with Charlie Parker, surprised everyone when he died last July at sixty-nine. Coleman had seen them rise and he had seen them fall fast. He had sung his heart out across the country, beginning his career with the big bands of Jay McShann and Earl Hines. He held on to everything he learned. In his baritone phrasing, thick, romantic tones rose up from the gutbucket into wide clouds of lyricism. On fast tunes, Coleman used a floating beat that sailed up over the rhythm, and the man could shout down the stars singing the blues.

He had kicked back in penthouses, and he had sweated on a chain gang. In the raw edges of the night life, he became familiar with the spiritual gray that dulls distinctions between good and evil. The crooner said that he was one of those who came up when being a classy person with darker than white skin could mean trouble. But Earl had watched his idols be classy anyway and decided that he was going to go the same way he saw them go.

The last time I talked with him, the reddish-brown-skinned baritone recalled being a Southern kid on his bicycle more than fifty years ago and seeing posters that announced the arrival of the greatest band in the world. He told of a magical afternoon in Mississippi and of pedalling out to the train station, where he heard the sound of Duke Ellington's brass men warming up, the light hitting those silver or golden horns through which they eased so much heat and sophisticated feeling. Then he spoke of looking through the windows at the Ellingtonians, inside the private Pullman cars that sat on those Mississippi train tracks like luxury hotel rooms on wheels. He remembered the spit and polish of the Negro men who were serving them, in movements swift but casual with authority. There were also thrilled and thrilling women there, all those fine brown felines visiting the artists who set the romantic standards for men from coast to coast, border to border.



Earl Coleman

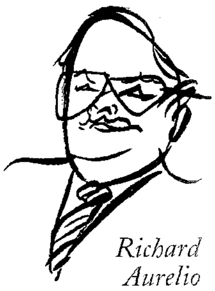
That night, in the company of what was obviously an unforgettable brown-skinned beauty, Earl attended the dance where Ellington's band was performing. Negroes took to the floor on every tune, and whites sat behind ropes, enjoying Ellington's music and the floor show of romance and rhythm so superbly provided by the local people who became, in Dizzy Gillespie's words, "the mirrors of the music." Earl remembered that during intermission the smooth-looking Ellington sat at a table with the whites who ran the town, but that he sat not as the target of a joke or as some version of inferiority. He charmed and laughed and told tales as a man of talent and aristocratic bearing whose humanity took a back seat to no one's.

I now understand that whenever I heard Coleman sing or sat down with the man or spoke with him on the phone, he was always savoring that moment as a Mississippi dreamer in his teens, back down the staircase of time to the point where he saw just how far real talent could take someone, no matter where on the social spectrum that someone had come from. As a romantic balladeer, even on those cold, cold blue nights when he was standing in the gutter, Earl Coleman was surely looking at the stars. —STANLEY CROUCH

SCRAMBLING FOR RESPECTABILITY

AFTER the summer from hell, when William Bennett and Bob Dole made Time Warner the butt of indignation over crime and social decay, the company has apparently seen the light. Gone is its stake in Interscope Records, the rap-music label it so vigorously defended in the name of free speech. Now Time Warner is joining its former adversaries in the crusade against sex on cable television, to save curious children from the Bondage Phone Line and other late-night Manhattan staples. When the Supreme Court considers a challenge to a censorship provision in the 1992 cable act sponsored by Jesse Helms, probably this spring, the company plans to file an amicus brief supporting the provision.

Leading the charge is Richard Aurelio, the president of the Time Warner New York City Cable Group, whose gentle voice and resemblance to Captain Kangaroo don't hurt the company's new image. Aurelio sits stiffly in his French Provincial office, on the forty-third floor of the Time-Life Building, his shoulders at right angles to his torso, while he dismisses the possibility of ulterior motives for his company's about-face on censorship.


Richard Aurelio

Shortly after the gangsta-rap showdown, Aurelio sent notices to the almost three hundred thousand subscribers in the southern Manhattan cable system saying that, for their protection, Time Warner would begin scrambling the "indecent programming" on Channel 35, the notorious sex channel that carries the likes of Al Goldstein and Robin Byrd free with the company's basic cable. Rather than simply offering to scramble the signal at the customer's request, Time Warner invited those who *weren't* fazed by the "risk of exposing minors" to the explicit shows to sign up for continued unscrambled service.

Sixty thousand customers did so, which Aurelio takes to mean that the two hundred and thirty thousand others are offended by Channel 35 and don't want it. He isn't buying the idea that people might hesitate to identify themselves as porn fans or might not bother sending back a card. "I don't accept this argument of embarrassment," Aurelio says. "I've had too many friends go in to see 'Deep Throat,' and they're not in disguise. It just doesn't happen in this borough that people are embarrassed."

Goldstein, Byrd, and Lou Maletta, of Gay Cable Network, responded to the scrambling proposal by filing for a preliminary injunction against it, citing First Amendment rights. In granting the injunction, Judge Leonard Sand, of the United States District Court, couldn't help noting the auspicious timing of Time Warner's outrage. The company has carried a version of Channel 35 for twenty years without fuss—and under the Helms amendment it has had the right to dump the shows for the past three—but Aurelio unveiled his scrambling plan just as Bennett's attacks on the company's gangsta-rap label reached a crescendo.

Beyond the P.R. value of this moral awakening, though, Time Warner has a financial incentive to silence Channel 35: the company is itself a player in the indecency market, with two pay-per-view channels devoted to sex. Movies like "Nympho Files" already bring Time Warner an estimated six million dollars a year citywide and are the most profitable, fastest-growing sector of pay-per-view. As Kenneth Norwick, a co-counsel for the plaintiffs, said the other day, "The Judge suggested, 'Why don't you just scramble the channel for people who want it scrambled?' The official answer was that they're protecting innocent children from stumbling onto it. Maybe an unstated reason is 'Then people will have to buy *our* dirty movies.' " What's more, in contrast to Goldstein's "Midnight Blue," which is confined to late night, kids can tune in to Time Warner's AdultVision starting at 7:30 A.M. Two buttons to punch on the remote control and—presto!—"The Smart Ass Delinquent" appears on their set, and $4.95 appears on next month's cable bill.

For the moment, all scrambling has been stayed until the Supreme Court reviews the constitutionality of the Helms amendment. "All I want to do is make people out there feel that we're sensitive to their problems, to their concerns about their children," Aurelio says, trying to explain how he can "abhor" censorship and support an amendment that mandates it. As the right's moral crusade broadens, though, the world's largest media company may come to regret that position.

PHONING HOME

YOU see them on streets and buses with phones at their ears, and you can tell their age by their posture: the slump (to hide) or the swagger (to flaunt). Joining dealmakers and glitterati, more and more upscale teens are packing mobile phones, the new electronic umbilical cord.

The teen phone often originates in the zone of nervous parents, itchy kids, and uneasy truces, and for the youngster it can be an unwanted apron string. Rebecca, a twelve-year-old seventh grader and a new rider of city buses, deems it an embarrassment. "It's not exactly *my* phone," she says. "I have it because my parents make me call." Conversations are short: "Hi. I'm on the bus." "Bye" is optional.

Rebecca's mother says, "She has to check in. That's the deal. I say, 'Thank you for calling,' and she hangs up. That's the total conversation."

Rebecca, on being reminded that she may arrive at an age when she will not have to call, says, "No, I won't. They like me to call." Her only concession: "It's better than a *baby*sitter!"

It's a different world by high school, when the phone as ball and chain gives way to what older teens refer to by the pet name "my cell." One Dalton sophomore notes gleefully, "Someone's mouth drops when you take it out on the street!" She says that she got her phone for Hamptons beach parties. "Majorly, why I got it is if a party gets busted, you need a ride quickly, and you gotta get outta there," she says. "In the cafeteria, lots of kids are on their cells. We do it because it's the thing. A lot do it for the look." The funniest thing, she says, is "making a call on it next to the pay phone," done for effect. Second-funniest: the ringing backpack in mid-class. She estimates that a quarter of the kids in her grade have one, and, by senior year, "really, like almost everyone. It just comes in handy—to be in contact with my friends. It's nice to, y'know, whatever." ♦

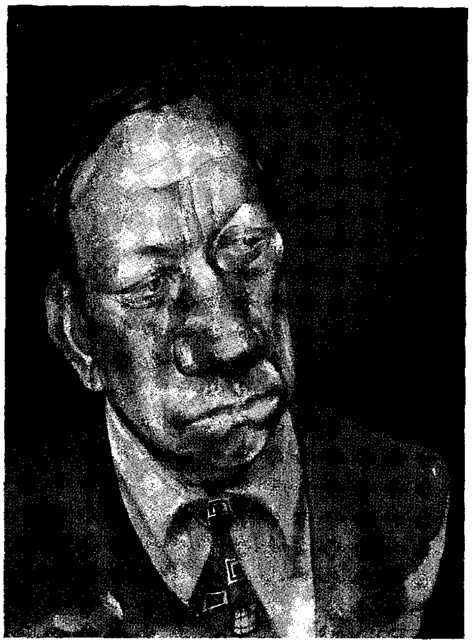
"Children of a Lesser Country," Calvin Tomkins; "Scrambling for Respectability," Sheryl Fragin; "Phoning Home," Sally Levitt Steinberg.

THE POLITICAL SCENE

DOLLFACE

If George Pataki is as innocuous as he seems, how has he managed to shake things up so quickly?

BY JAMES TRAUB



The image of Pataki the genial hick, always something of a mirage, has disappeared.

STEVE BRODNER

GOVERNOR GEORGE PATAKI keeps a battered Voit basketball beneath the desk in his office in the World Trade Center. On my first visit to Pataki, last fall, I happened to ask if he was left-handed, and he scooped up the ball and held it in one big, farm-boy hand. "I am one of the few governors who can palm a basketball," he said, with a goofy grin. Pataki plopped the ball in his lap, stuck his shiny black shoes up on the desk, and began chatting idly about the petty irritations of left-handedness. "The thing that drives me nuts is getting razor blades into razors," he said earnestly. I began to wonder how such an apparently feckless character could be governor of *anything;* and at that moment George Pataki's weird magic was doing its work. As one lobbyist for public-interest groups says, "With Mario Cuomo, you came out of a meeting feeling pissed off even if you were agreeing with him; George may kill you, but you would still like him."

Pataki is the anti-Cuomo—not brilliant, not grandiloquent, not maddening. Cuomo was a passionate, domineering figure, who had an almost religious obsession with the truth as he saw it; he often seemed more preoccupied with controlling the interpretation of events than with controlling the events themselves. Pataki is a wooden speaker, and even in private he can be platitudinous. His perpetual geniality leaves an impression of complacency and shallowness. Just after the gubernatorial election, David Letterman cracked that scientists had decided to call a colorless and odorless element they had discovered "Patakium."

And yet Pataki has as grandiose a conception of his mission as Mario Cuomo had. In his State of the State speech last week, Pataki compared his campaign to shrink the size of government to "freedom's victory over Fascism." The analogy may have been a gross insult both to liberalism and to the Allied effort during the Second World War; but the truth is that in his first year in office he ended an era of government expansion in New York State that stretches back beyond Cuomo to the nineteen-twenties. If he gets his way with the drastic budget cuts and the welfare and Medicaid reforms that he has proposed for the coming fiscal year, he will have enrolled one of the nation's most liberal states in the national conservative movement being led by Newt Gingrich. And he will almost certainly leave a deeper mark on the state than Mario Cuomo, for all his oratorical glory, ever did.

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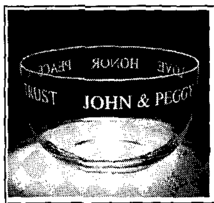

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line of patricians who had a deep faith in public service. George Pataki grew up on a farm at the edge of the working-class Hudson River town of Peekskill. He is a plain man with a plain, Rotarian view of government. One morning, I heard him rally a crowd at a greeting-card company in Elmira, in central New York, with the promise "You give us more jobs, we'll give you more money! That's what it's all about." This is unlikely to go down as one of the more resonant phrases in New York's political history, but the New York of patrician heroes and resonant rhetoric has vanished into history; in recent years, the Empire State has slid into an economic pit. From March, 1989, to March, 1993, New York lost five hundred and forty-eight thousand jobs—half of them *after* the national recovery had begun, when other industrial states were gaining jobs. During these years, New York was dead last among the states in job creation. Fortune 500 companies have left (only forty-three were still there in 1993, down from a hundred and forty-eight in 1968), and two years ago New York slipped behind Texas to become the third-most-populous state.

Pataki tends to recite these statistics in machine-gun fashion; they serve as the basic elements of his stump speech. His 1994 gubernatorial campaign was based on the conservative premise that New York was hemorrhaging jobs because of the high taxes needed to support its vast government—the heritage of those legendary governors as well as of Mario Cuomo. And, in fact, New York has the heaviest state and local tax burden in the country. In predominantly Republican upstate counties, where the recession hit hardest, turnout was as high as ninety-five per cent. Pataki was swept in on economic outrage.

His victory changed the political calculus that had governed the state for years. Within weeks of the election, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, an old-line liberal, whom Democrats were counting on to preserve the budgetary edifice of the Cuomo era, publicly endorsed a tax cut, though a smaller and more progressive one than Pataki had proposed. And Silver was already a supporter of the death penalty, the other pillar of Pataki's campaign. On the most basic issues—"death and taxes," as Mario Cuomo still characterizes them bitterly—Pataki had won before a shot was fired.

The first budget that Pataki presented, on February 1st, called for unprecedented cuts in social services, including $1.9 billion in Medicaid and welfare funds, in order to finance the tax cut and reduce the $4.7-billion deficit that the Governor had inherited. Assembly Democrats were outraged by the magnitude of the proposed cuts, and Pataki spent much of the next four months in bitter negotiations with Assembly Speaker Silver. Both men say that there was no yelling or name-calling, but the Governor, in his own quiet way, proved quite willing to wave the big stick as negotiations dragged on. He threatened to cut off paychecks for the state's two hundred and ten thousand employees if the budget wasn't passed by April 1st, the start of the new fiscal year. He relented on that threat, but did withhold the pay of the legislature and its staff. This came as a shock to Democrats in Albany, who had always considered Pataki an inoffensive, garden-variety Republican. "He has been much more combative than governors usually are," Richard Gottfried, a Democratic assemblyman from Manhattan, says.

IN the end, Pataki settled for much less than he had initially demanded. Though he halted the growth in spending, he ended up spending more than he had planned, and financing the difference with the kinds of fiscal gimmicks that he had criticized in the past; he accepted a tax cut that was slightly more than half the size of the one that he had proposed, and was somewhat more progressive; and he pushed through only the most modest reforms of the welfare system. Pataki's willingness to compromise on fundamental issues left both conservatives and some reform-minded Democrats wondering whether he was truly committed to changing the state's direction.

But Pataki knew that he would have another chance to make those cuts the following year, and in mid-December he proposed a budget that would reduce the state's expenditures for the first time in fifty years. Among the areas targeted for sharp cutbacks in the Governor's current budget, of $63.8 billion, are Medicaid, mental health, and higher education; tuition in the state and city

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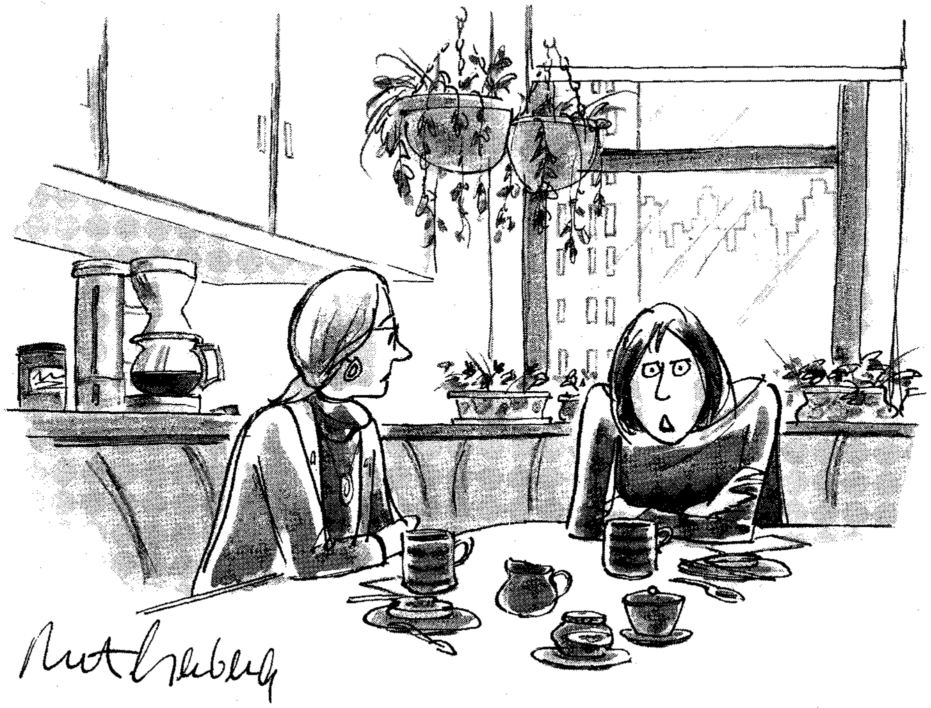

"He didn't exactly ask for a divorce—he offered me an early-retirement package."

• •

university systems could rise as much as seven hundred dollars a year under the budget proposal. Pataki has also advanced a welfare-reform plan that contains not only incentives for work and strict time limits for recipients but also a twenty-five-per-cent cut in monthly stipends. The image of Pataki the genial hick, always something of a mirage, has disappeared. "I'm surprised at the energy, the breadth of what he's doing," says Fred Siegel, a professor of history at Cooper Union and a student of Albany politics. Conservatives have, for the time being, at least, dropped their skepticism. According to Thomas L. (Dusty) Rhodes, who is a founder of Change NY, a group that promotes fiscal conservatism, "The feeling last year was, 'Direction, fine; order of magnitude, I wonder.' This budget has shown terrific order of magnitude."

Yet it is hard to connect the amiable Pataki to his hardboiled politics. When I described the Governor to his wife, Libby, as a "conservative," she recoiled, and said, "George is much more of a conciliator and a consensus-building type of individual." Pataki is very different from, for example, New York City's Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who relishes opportunities for confrontation and seems uncomfortable without an adversary: whereas Giuliani assumes the worst about his foes, Pataki assumes the best. "I try to find the good in people, and try to find the common good," he said during our conversation in his World Trade Center office, the basketball still sitting in his lap.

One striking fact about the Governor is that he is thoroughly liked by many people who think his policies are dead wrong and even cruel. David Paterson, a state senator from Harlem and upper Manhattan, first met Pataki six years ago, at the legislators' gym in Albany. After Paterson, who is legally blind, had been fumbling around with a stationary bicycle for a few minutes, a big, gangly fellow in gym shorts came over to help him. The same thing happened on a second occasion, and his new friend said, "If you want to coördinate your schedule, I'll tell you when I'll be here." Paterson had assumed that this fellow was a staff aide until the Samaritan introduced himself as the Republican assemblyman from Peekskill. As governor, Paterson says, Pataki has been as unassuming as ever.

Pataki's personal decency has led to some basic misconceptions. Paterson wonders if the Governor is being "manipulated by some pretty diabolical people." Richard Brodsky, a Democratic assemblyman from Westchester who has known Pataki for years and likes him, declares, "He has absolutely no ideological core. When the wave started moving right and it was a way to advance your career, it didn't trouble him to move that way." Pataki is, in fact, a moderate secular Republican on social issues, but he is a thoroughgoing dogmatist on the basic questions of small government and low taxes. Much the same can be said of his lieutenant governor, Elizabeth McCaughey Ross, a preternaturally perky Manhattan policy intellectual who is quite conservative on economic issues. (She is widely considered a bit player in the administration.)

Pataki cannot be simply dismissed as an opportunist. In 1993, having just joined the State Senate after serving for eight years in the Assembly, he openly defied Albany's annual budget charade. Year in and year out, the then Majority Leader of the Senate, Ralph Marino, had thrown his party's support behind Mario Cuomo's budget, using his power to add Republican causes, and Republican goodies, to Democratic ones. And, year in and year out, Republican Young Turks arrived in the Senate and fell into line behind their leader, thus assuring themselves of desirable offices and committee assignments. Pataki, though he was a mere freshman, became perhaps the first Republican in two decades to vote against a Democratic budget, on the ground that the budget contained a tax increase. "We had a six-hour conference, and it wasn't the philosophy of government," Pataki recalls of the aftermath. "It was 'How could you stab the Party and the conference in the back?' " The answer was that Pataki was a member of the new, ideologically driven generation of Republicans.

ONE morning, as Pataki and I were driving down to his office in the World Trade Center, I noticed a copy of Edmund Morris's biography of the young Teddy Roosevelt lying open, face down, on the front seat. I asked the Governor what page he was on. "I've read the whole thing," he said. "What I'm reading now is the footnotes." The Governor, who reveres Roosevelt, named his first son Teddy, and he keeps portraits of the Rough Rider in both his office and his home in Albany. Pataki first studied Teddy Roosevelt at Yale in the mid-sixties, when he came to identify his own nascent conservatism with T.R.'s faith in "activist government" rather than with traditional corporate Republicanism or the cruel social Darwinism of the rich. But the T.R. model hardly seems compatible with Pataki's record, so I asked the Governor where he had displayed this strain of activism. "The environment," he replied immediately. "I believe that there is a very important and aggressive role government should play in environmental issues, setting high standards for air and water."

In 1989, when Pataki was in the Assembly, a lobbying group called Environmental Advocates named him their "legislator of the year." Lee Wasserman, who was until recently the group's executive director, says, "Pataki was among the handful of go-to legislators during that time. I cannot recall a single instance that we went to him with what we considered a critical piece of legislation that he didn't respond positively, and not only respond but go out and see what could be done." Probably the greatest achievement of Pataki's first year as governor was a settlement brokered by his counsel, Michael Finnegan, and strongly supported by Pataki himself, that allowed New York City to insure itself a clean drinking-water supply. The agreement miraculously satisfied the concerns of the city, of the towns in its watershed, and of many environmentalists. It was a triumph both of old-fashioned conservationism and of the consensus-building style that many people expected from Pataki.

In general, however, Pataki has seemed a different man as governor. Wasserman now asserts that the Pataki administration has adopted "the Mississippi approach to environmental protection—give the polluters anything they ask for." Department of Environmental Conservation officials confirm accusations that critical elements of the enforcement staff have been gutted, that a few officials considered too keen on enforcement have been transferred to marginal positions, and that a new philosophy of working with polluters has effectively sent out a message of impunity. Pataki is uncharacteristically touchy on this score. When I asked

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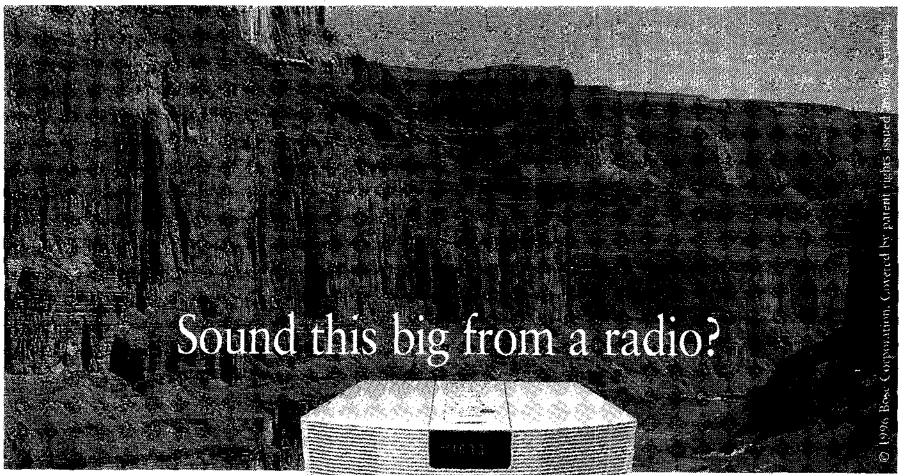
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whether he was concerned about the deep cutbacks in his enforcement staff, he said, "That was not meant in any way to jeopardize enforcement. I was told that we would have the ability and staff in place to do enforcement." The "I was told" sounded suspiciously like a waffle, especially in the light of an acknowledgment by Pataki's chief of staff, Bradford J. Race, Jr., that the enforcement staff had fallen below what he bureaucratically described as the "fill level."

A prime piece of evidence in support of Wasserman's charge was a settlement that political appointees in the D.E.C. negotiated last summer with General Electric, whose silicone plant in Waterford, on the Hudson just north of Albany, had been discharging chemical wastes into the environment. One D.E.C. official says that General Electric threatened to defer a planned forty-eight-million-dollar investment in the plant if the agency insisted on a punitive settlement (an allegation that G.E. denies); in the end, the company averted such an outcome. I asked Pataki about the story, and he answered, characteristically, with an anecdote. "I grew up on the Hudson River, and my grandfather had a little place smack on the river at Verplanck," he said. "When I wasn't out on the farm, I was down at the river, and you couldn't go in"—it was too polluted. "So one of our top environmental priorities is the Hudson. If we had to make a deal that I did not think was environmentally right for the river to keep a job or attract a job, I wouldn't even think twice about it." But the Pataki administration has, according to critics, been remarkably lax toward G.E. and other manufacturers. It's as if the Governor thought that his sincerity rather than his policy was at issue.

If the Governor is fooling himself, so, in all likelihood, are those environmentalists who are waiting for the real Pataki to show up. In any conflict between the Governor's Hudson River conservationism and his goal of improving New York's business climate, the latter is virtually certain to win. Pataki is a committed deregulator. One of his first acts in office was to put a moratorium on new regulations, and recently he replaced the freeze with an executive order that subjected all new regulations to a stringent cost-benefit analysis. He has granted enormous powers to his regulatory chief, Robert L. King, who is the one hard-line conservative in his inner circle. King has outraged critics by blocking some regulations offensive to industry from being issued, getting others rewritten, and flatly revoking still others.

It may well be that, as Pataki claims, Roosevelt himself would be a deregulator if he were around today. New York now has so many regulatory requirements, and so many overlapping jurisdictions, that getting a permit to build something, whether a hospital wing or a factory, can take three or four years. Even a D.E.C. official concedes that in years past "we were probably being way overzealous." In the last year, New York State actually gained nearly a hundred thousand private-sector jobs, and some portion of that increase is certainly traceable to the changes in the tax, regulatory, and enforcement climate that Pataki's policies have produced. At the same time, a deregulated, low-enforcement climate means that corporations will have to be trusted to do the right thing. That's not a problem for Pataki. He proudly announced in a speech last summer to the Business Council of New York State, "The days of attacking business are over." Of course, that isn't quite how Teddy Roosevelt, the great trust-buster, saw things. "I know the banker, merchant, and railroad king well, and *they* also need education and sound chastisement," T.R. once said.

During the car trip down to the World Trade Center, I told Pataki that I had yet to hear him talk about the harm that the market can inflict on the public, as opposed to the harm that the state can inflict on the market. Pataki thought for a good long while and then said, "When it's appropriate, you will."

ACCORDING to high-school records that have been lovingly preserved by George Pataki's mother, Peggy, his favorite food as a boy was "meatball wedges." Like so much else about the Governor, his tastes in food have not changed. One day, I was invited to accompany him on a helicopter trip upstate, and as we flew back to Albany he polished off a meatball hero that had been bought at one of our stops. The Governor ate with the abandon of a teen-ager; a tiny trickle of tomato sauce ran down his chin. Happily sated, he sat back, his knees poking up to expose a length of black sock. At such moments of reverie, Pataki's thoughts almost always turn to his days as backup forward on the Peekskill High basketball team. Now he began to relive, as though for the umpteenth time, the squad's devastating loss to Sleepy Hollow in the sectionals. "They went into a full-court press, and we just panicked," Pataki said. "It was awful." He pressed the heels of his hands to his forehead, the agony still fresh.

Pataki is an artless man, and it is remarkable how well this artlessness has served his political career. His temperament is his greatest political asset. "His amiability is like a shield," John Faso, a Republican assemblyman from the capital area, says. "He's able to impart to the listener empathy and understanding for what they're saying, without committing himself to their point of view." Faso also notes that Pataki makes no attempt to impress others with his intelligence or with displays of passion. He seems to have total control over his ego—an incalculable advantage in an ambitious man.

Pataki's grandfather sold produce from a horse-drawn wagon. His father was a mailman, and young George, according to some accounts, was the poorest kid in his class. When I asked the Governor if that was true, he laughed and said, "We were kinda poor." Then he changed the subject, saying, "My personal experience was absolutely wonderful. We had a very close family. It wasn't just me and my brother. There were fourteen of us who grew up on the farm with my grandparents and my aunts and uncles and my parents." Like Ronald Reagan, Pataki has talked so much about his supposedly Edenic childhood that one begins to suspect he has manufactured it. But he hasn't. Pataki's bulletproof contentment seems not a form of compensation for some early wound but a consequence of the semi-pastoral, close-knit world in which he was reared.

Richard Jackson, an old friend of Pataki's whom he has appointed Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, remembers skating on the ponds on the Pataki farm, and roasting marshmallows, and working the cider press, and picking vegetables, and shooting baskets at a rim that tilted off the back of the house. Pataki's mother, who still lives in the tiny, vinyl-sided family farmhouse where she raised her two sons, says that George never got in trouble, never lost his temper, and never let her speak ill of anyone. "He was such a sweet kid," she says. "We always called him Dollface."

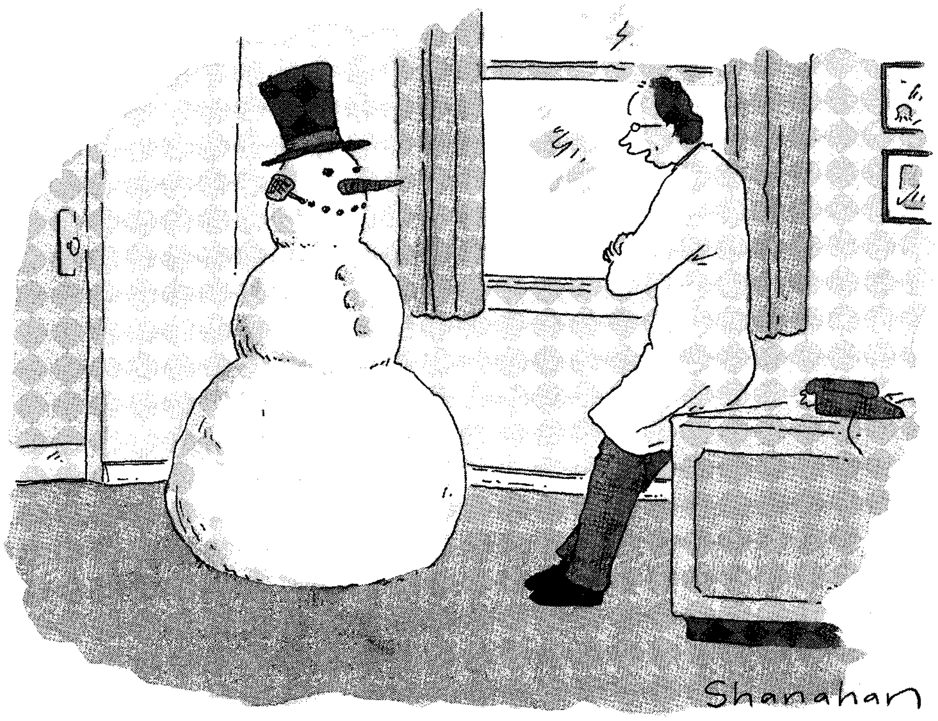
Pataki was not dumb, even if he made no attempt to appear smart. With little noticeable effort, he did well enough at Peekskill High to gain admission to Yale. There he spent most of his time playing intramural basketball and drinking beer, but he still managed good grades and went on to Columbia Law School. Bud Shulman, a friend of Pataki's from Columbia who is now a partner at the New York firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, says he was shocked to learn that his friend, who would hang out all night at the Gold Rail, on Broadway near 110th Street, had made law review in his first year. "There was always an ambitious part of George that we really didn't see very much," Shulman says. Like George Bush, George Pataki used his gentleness to mask his competitiveness. Unlike Bush, though, Pataki wasn't to the manner born. He is, inside and out, a self-made man. Even as a basketball player, Pataki says, "I was a plugger."

Pataki's political outlook, like his character, has scarcely changed since childhood. He grew up in a traditionally Republican household and absorbed a visceral anti-Communism from his Hungarian-immigrant grandparents. Even in the midst of the leftist maelstrom that was Columbia in 1968, he was an unapologetic defender of conservative politics and of the Vietnam War. (He was eligible for the draft but, to his immense relief, was rejected because of poor eyesight.) Pataki joined a Columbia group called the Majority Coalition, which organized counter-demonstrations when rebelling students occupied campus buildings. "They were looked upon as creatures of the Middle Ages," Shulman recalls. They were generally despised, but Pataki himself was not. Pataki claimed a leader of the radical organization Students for a Democratic Society as one of his best friends. Pataki had the gift, rare at any time but especially in the late sixties, of wearing his politics lightly. He was elected to the law-school senate despite being to the right of virtually everyone. He talked openly about becoming governor of New York, and he didn't mind in the least being laughed at.

PATAKI has never lost an election, and he has always reached higher office by dislodging an incumbent. In 1981, at the age of thirty-five, he sought his first office. He ran for mayor of Peekskill against a Democratic machine that had controlled City Hall for fourteen years. He knocked on nearly every door in a town of eighteen thousand people, and he won. As mayor, he was known mostly for his tireless—and successful—campaign to reverse Peekskill's long economic decline by persuading developers to build housing in town. It was also in Peekskill that Pataki began to put his small-government principles into action. "George would never fire anyone—he was like Ronald Reagan," Frank Catalina, a lawyer who worked under Pataki in Peekskill, says. "He would not be the bad guy. But it was amazing—people would be *happy* to be reassigned. Pataki can eliminate a whole department, and people will still love him." At least, they did in Peekskill, for he was handily reëlected.

Pataki reached the State Assembly in 1984. He spent eight years as a member of the powerless Republican minority, and grew increasingly bored and frustrated. In 1992, desperate to break out, he decided to "primary" Mary B. Goodhue, the incumbent Republican state senator from northern Westchester. The verb is used by Albany Republicans to denote an unthinkable act of Party disloyalty. It was an act of personal disloyalty as well, since Pataki had worked as Goodhue's counsel. Goodhue had said that she would retire at the end of her term, but she changed her mind, and Pataki wasn't going to wait any longer. "It was a huge, huge roll of the dice—by far the biggest political risk that I ever took," Pataki says. It was also a bitter race. There were charges that the Pataki campaign circulated a rumor that Goodhue was senile. Pataki's Democratic opponents in earlier races have said that they, too, were the targets of vicious whispering campaigns. These charges were never proved, and Pataki denies them, but they left the impression that, for all his personal benevolence, Pataki was willing to let others play hardball in his behalf.

Pataki is an intuitive politician with an acute sense of timing. He thought



"Good news—those lumps were just coal."

about running for governor in 1990 but decided that neither he nor the enfeebled Republican Party apparatus was ready. He planned to wait until 1998. But then, as the 1994 campaign approached, Pataki recognized—along with a number of other New York Republicans—that Mario Cuomo was extremely vulnerable. Meanwhile, the Republican Party had been rejuvenated. In 1991, Senator Alfonse D'Amato had installed his own man, William Powers, as the state Party chairman. Powers focussed his energies on finding a candidate who could beat Cuomo and started auditioning hopefuls in early 1993, by sending them to speak in remote, snowbound corners of the state. Pataki "always wanted to go out," he says. "Nobody demonstrated the fire in the belly he had." At the same time, D'Amato's pollster, Arthur Finkelstein, was concluding that Pataki had the right demographic profile—a downstater and a pro-choice Catholic. D'Amato decided that Pataki would be the candidate. At the Republican State Convention in May of 1994, D'Amato, along with Powers and a campaign consultant, Kieran Mahoney, called county leaders, one by one, into a back room and told them that the time had come to close ranks behind George Pataki. "People said it wasn't pretty," Powers says.

And so Pataki, who had already proved himself adept at embracing the hard facts of political life, placed himself under the tutelage of the master of hardball. Some of Pataki's friends back in Peekskill winced at descriptions of the "stealth campaign" that he was said to be running, and at charges that he was attacking Cuomo without detailing his own positions. The premise of the Pataki campaign seemed to be that his indistinctness would help him keep the focus of disgust on the incumbent. Pataki took D'Amato's directions without a murmur of protest, and it was this malleability which made him vulnerable to the savage personal attacks that Mayor Giuliani launched in the last few weeks of the campaign, when he called Pataki D'Amato's "puppet." Pataki fell behind in the polls by as many as eighteen points, but eventually upstate hostility to New York City proved so great that Giuliani's endorsement wound up galvanizing support for Pataki.

Bob King was with Pataki in Rochester just after the Mayor endorsed Cuomo, in a televised press conference. "George felt betrayed," King says flatly. Libby Pataki says that it took her many months to forgive the Mayor, since her eldest children had to hear and read about his attacks on their father. Political veterans in New York City speculated about the form that the Governor's inevitable revenge would take. But, incredibly, it never came; the damage that Pataki may have inflicted on New York City through budget cuts has been a matter not of personal vendetta but of political choice. "Retribution is not in his lexicon," Mike Finnegan says. Today, Pataki and Giuliani enjoy a businesslike relationship. The Governor has supported the Mayor's drive for control over the public schools, and until recently the Mayor had defended the Governor's budget choices. Last week, however, Giuliani changed course, and, in a broad criticism of the Pataki budget, asserted that the proposed welfare cuts would "ravage" the city. Giuliani, of course, does not share Pataki's gift for forgiveness. (It is frightening to contemplate what might have happened if Pataki had done to him what he did to Pataki.)

If the revenge issue has quieted down, the D'Amato issue has not. One Republican operative says that some of Pataki's advisers have urged him to "pick a fight with D'Amato," but a man who doesn't pick fights with enemies isn't likely to pick one with friends. Pataki praises the Senator at every opportunity, and he has amply repaid his debt of gratitude by his early and enthusiastic support of Bob Dole. Pataki is not a Dole-style Republican, and he has not supported him in past campaigns, but D'Amato has promised to deliver New York for the Kansas Senator, so Pataki has fallen in line.

In the past year, the Pataki administration has been criticized not so much for taking orders from D'Amato as for employing the controversial tactics that are often associated with the Senator—the trading of favors for political contributions, the appointment to state jobs of the friends and family members of prominent Republicans, the politicization of policy issues. As last spring's budget talks dragged on, Pataki authorized Powers to unleash a series of television ads that targeted Democratic assemblymen who were considered vulnerable—this on top of the threat to shut down the government. The ads blamed the Democrats for blocking the budget, and featured an image of the local officeholder morphing into Assembly Speaker Silver, who has hardly been a popular figure in much of the state. Although Democrats denounced the administration for this naked act of partisanship, Powers says, "My attitude was 'Fuck it, let's nuke it.' You can't win if you want status quo." Finnegan admits that he found the ads "a little harsh," and he is quick to point out that they weren't Pataki's idea. But Pataki helped raise the money to pay for them.

AFTER Pataki revealed his new budget last month, the response from Assembly Democrats, including Sheldon Silver, was surprisingly muted. Silver and the Democrats now have to live with the tax cuts that they approved last year. The cuts totalled only $515 million last year, but they will grow to $1.7 billion in the coming year, and will swell the deficit to $4 billion. Last year, Silver opposed significant welfare reform; now he says that he is receptive to substantial limitations. Advocates of the programs that Pataki plans to cut recognize that the Governor has fundamentally changed the debate. "You have Democrats behaving like Republicans, and the poor are the ones who are taking it on the chin," says Arthur Levin, who is the director of the Center for Medical Consumers, a patients' advocacy group.

I happened to see Pataki immediately after he'd had a long session with his budget director in late November. The Governor and I were in his office in the Capitol, a small room dominated by the portrait of Teddy Roosevelt. Pataki was in an unusually solemn mood. He admitted that the combination of the deficit and impending federal budget cuts had forced him to do “*dozens* of things I would rather not do.” And yet the more he spoke about the reforms he planned the more he slipped into something very like passion. “Whether it’s welfare, Medicaid, or public housing, the whole idea should be not ‘We’re the government, we’ll take care of you,’ ” he said. “The idea should be ‘You are a citizen in our society, and we want you to succeed.’ ”

Pataki hopes to cut a billion dollars from Medicaid. Even many health-care advocates concede that New York cannot continue to spend far more on the program than any other state. Pataki argues that the state can deliver medical services far more efficiently through managed-care programs. But he also says that doing so will “improve that person’s sense of self-worth, because that person will then become a consumer competed after.” Significant cuts may well be unavoidable, but under Pataki’s proposed budget, hospitals and nursing homes are bound to close and Medicaid recipients are almost certain to receive a narrower range of care than they currently do. Some might lose their coverage altogether—which might, of course, be bad for their sense of self-worth.

Pataki applies the market principle to almost everything: he wants individual colleges in the state university system to be free to set their own tuition rates; he wants the poor to be able to buy, rather than rent, public housing—with the payments reduced if their children stay in school. When I asked about welfare policy, Pataki told me an anecdote about a young black man who had wandered into his legislative office in Peekskill. The young man, it turned out, had been a heroin addict and had kicked the habit, gone on welfare, and then been forced into a job as part of a workfare program. “All of a sudden, he said to himself, ‘Hey, I got some work. I’m a great guy. I can make something of myself,’ ” Pataki recalled. Pataki traffics heavily in such heartwarming Reaganesque anecdotes. As with the mention of his grandfather on the Hudson, the Governor seems to feel that his personal sympathy puts him beyond political reproach.

Pataki’s welfare proposal is somewhat more nuanced than his story about the reformed heroin addict implies. In one suggestion that has won bipartisan approval, he has proposed increasing the amount that welfare recipients can earn without losing public assistance—an idea known as the earned-income disregard. He also hopes to devote a larger share of expected federal aid to day care, thus freeing young mothers to work. Otherwise, he hopes to use the same tactics now being deployed in many states—reduced monthly checks, severe time limits, heightened fraud detection. The objective is to make work more attractive and welfare less so. It succeeded for one very determined heroin addict, but will Pataki’s plan work for many of New York’s million five hundred thousand welfare recipients? Where will they find the entry-level jobs they need to join the economy? Pataki says blithely that private-sector growth will take care of the problem. This may turn out to be conservative fantasy. Yet welfare advocates recognize that Pataki is playing a strong hand. Gerry Billings, the executive director of the State Communities Aid Association, describes Pataki’s welfare package as “rather harsh, but probably realistic given the public mood, unfortunately.”

The public mood may not be so accommodating once Pataki’s cuts in programs that benefit the middle class, including higher education and mental health, take effect, after the budget is approved later this year. Throughout most of his first year, the Governor’s favorable ratings hovered in the mid-forties, and already Charles Schumer, the combative Democratic representative from Brooklyn, has indicated that he will run against Pataki in 1998. (Recently, the Governor’s approval numbers edged up into the low fifties for the first time.) Much of the public still seems to consider the Governor a good-natured blur; he has virtually no national recognition, and, unlike New Jersey’s governor, Christine Todd Whitman, appears on no one’s Vice-Presidential list. Of course, people have been belittling Pataki’s ambitions since he was in law school. The Governor doesn’t seem to mind. He knows how much you can accomplish if you’re willing to be underestimated. ♦

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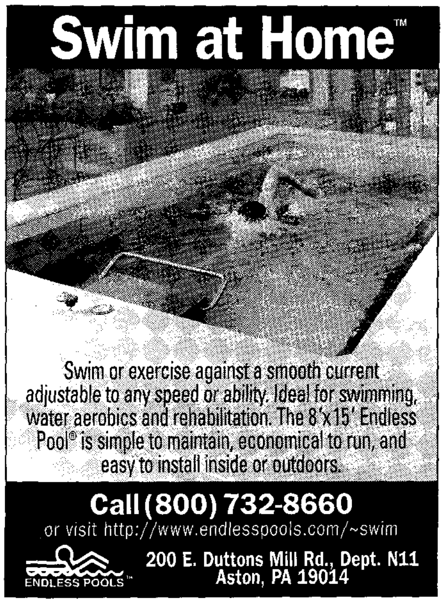
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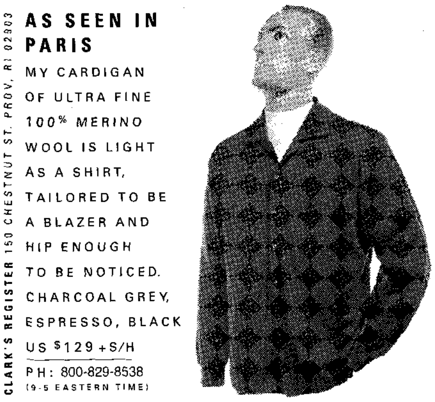
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POPULAR CHRONICLES

THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT

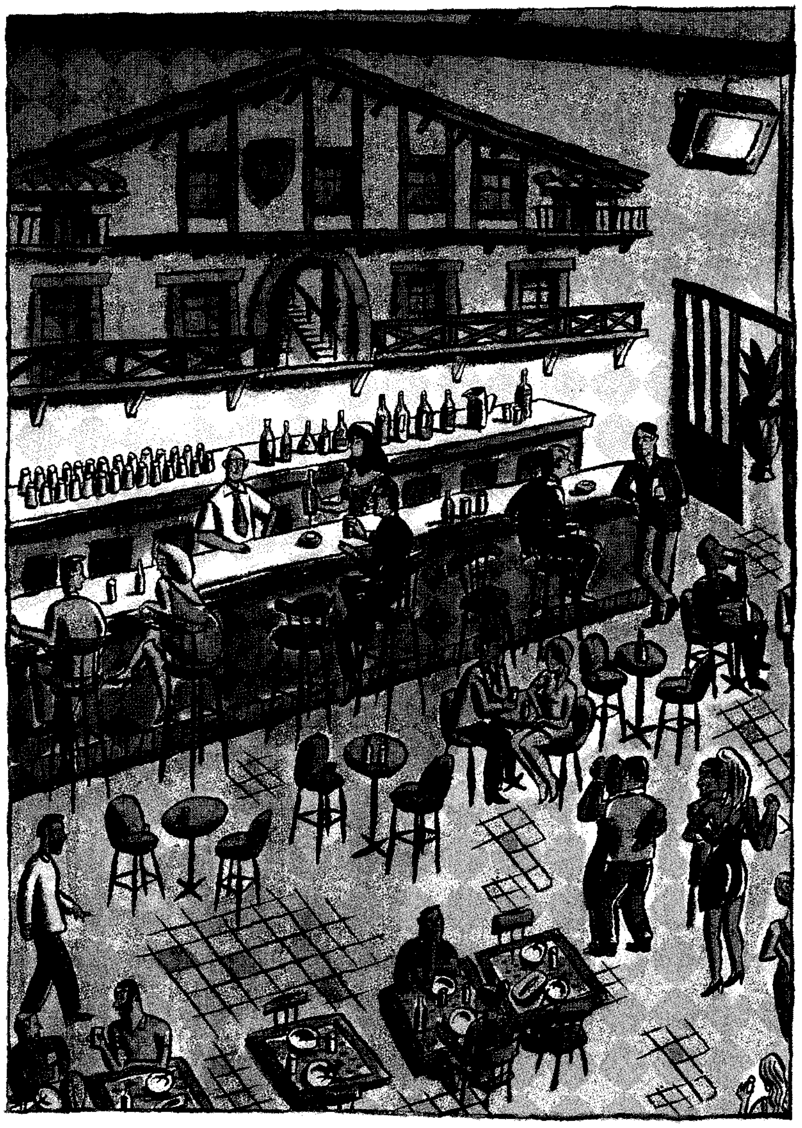
What's the difference between the Centro Vasco in Havana and the one in Miami? Thirty-three years of dreaming.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

IN Havana, the restaurant called Centro Vasco is on a street that Fidel Castro likes to drive down on his way home from the office. In Little Havana, in Miami, there is another Centro Vasco, on Southwest Eighth—a street that starts east of the Blue Lagoon and runs straight to the bay. The exterior of Miami's Centro Vasco is a hodgepodge of wind-scoured limestone chunks and flat tablets of Perma-stone set in arches and at angles, all topped with a scalloped red shingle roof. Out front are a gigantic round fountain, a fence made from a ship's anchor chain, and a snarl of hibiscus bushes and lacy palm trees. The building has had a few past lives. It was a speakeasy in the twenties, and for years afterward it was an Austrian restaurant called The Garden. The owners of The Garden were nostalgic Austrians, who, in 1965, finally got so nostalgic that they sold the place to a Cuban refugee named Juan Saizarbitoria and went back to Austria. Saizarbitoria had grown up in the Basque region of Spain, and he had made his way to Cuba in the late thirties by sneaking onto a boat and stowing away inside a barrel of sardines. When he first arrived in Havana, he pretended to be a world-famous jai-alai player, and then he became a cook at the jai-alai club. In 1940, he opened Centro Vasco, and he made it into one of the most popular restaurants in Havana. Having lost the restaurant to Castro, in 1962, Juan Saizarbitoria moved to Miami and set up Centro Vasco in exile. Along with a couple of funeral homes, it was one of the few big Cuban businesses to come to the United States virtually unchanged.

The first Centro Vasco in America was in a small building on the edge of Miami. After a year or so, Saizarbitoria bought The Garden from the departing Austrians. He didn't have enough money to redecorate, so he just hung a few paintings of his Basque homeland and of the Centro Vasco he'd left behind in Havana; otherwise, the walls remained covered with murals of the Black Forest and rustic Alpine scenes. The restaurant prospered: it became a home away from home for Miami's Cubans in exile. Soon there was money to spend, so a room was added, the parking lot was expanded, awnings were replaced. Inside, the walls were redone in a dappled buttery yellow, and the memories of Austria were lost forever under a thick coat of paint. Until then, there might have been no other place in the world so layered with different people's pinings—no other place where you could have had a Basque dinner in a restaurant from Havana in a Cuban neighborhood of a city in Florida in a dining room decorated with yodelling hikers and little deer.

THESE days, Centro Vasco is an eventful place. During a week I spent there recently, I would sometimes leaf back and forth through the reservation book, which was kept on a desk in the restaurant's foyer. The pages were rumpled, and blobbed with ink. Los Hombres Empresa, luncheon for twelve. Beatriz Barron, bridal shower. The Velgaras, the Torreses, and the Delgados, baby showers. A birthday party for Carmen Bravo and an anniversary party for Mr. and Mrs. Gerardo Capo. A paella party for an association of Cuban dentists. A fund-raiser for Manny Crespo, a candidate for judge. Southern Bell, a luncheon for twenty-eight people; someone had written next to the reservation, in giant letters, and underlined, "NO SANGRIA." The Little Havana Kiwanis Club cooking contest had been held in the Granada Room; the finals for Miss Cuba en Exilio had taken place on the patio. There were dinner reservations for people who wanted a bowl of *caldo Gallego*, the white-bean soup they used to eat at Centro Vasco in Havana; lunches for executives of Bacardi rum and for an adventurous group of Pizza Hut executives from Wisconsin; hundreds of reservations for people coming on Friday and Saturday nights to hear the popular Cuban singer Albita; a twice-annual reservation for the Centauros, 1941 alumni of a medical school in Havana; a daily reservation for a group of ladies who used to play canasta together in Cuba and relocated their game to Miami thirty years ago.



Juan Saizarbitoria brought the menu with him from Havana. It has hardly changed, except for a vegetable paella concocted one night especially for Madonna.

LOUSTAL

Juan Saizarbitoria goes through the book with me. This is not the Juan of the sardine barrel; he died four years ago, at the age of eighty-two. This is one of his sons—Juan, Jr., who now runs the restaurant with his brother, Iñaki. The Saizarbitorias are a great-looking family. Juan, Jr., who is near sixty, is pewter-haired and big-nosed and pink-cheeked; his forehead is as wide as a billboard, and he holds his eyebrows high, so he always looks a little amazed. Iñaki, fifteen years younger, is rounder and darker, with an arching smile and small, bright eyes. Juan, Jr.,'s son, Juan III, is now an international fashion model and is nicknamed Sal. He is said to be the spitting image of sardine-barrel Juan, whom everyone called Juanito. Before Sal became a model, he used to work in the restaurant now and then. Old ladies who had had crushes on Juanito in Havana would swoon at the sight of Sal, because he looked so much like Juanito in his youth. Everyone in the family talks a million miles a minute—the blood relatives, the spouses, the kids. Juan, Jr.,'s wife, Totty, who helps to manage the place, once left a message on my answering machine which sounded a lot like someone running a Mixmaster. She knows everybody, talks to everybody, and seems to have things to say about the things she has to say. Once, she told me she was so tired she could hardly speak, but I didn't believe her. Juanito was not known as a talker; in fact, he spoke only Basque, could barely get along in Spanish, and never knew English at all. In Miami, he occasionally played golf with Jackie Gleason, to whom he had nothing to say. Some people remember Juanito as tough and grave but also surprisingly sentimental. He put a drawing of the Havana Centro Vasco on his Miami restaurant's business card, and he built a twenty-foot-wide scale model of it, furnished with miniature tables and chairs. It hangs over the bar in the Miami restaurant to this day.

ON a Friday, I come to the restaurant early. The morning is hot and bright, but inside the restaurant it's dark and still. The rooms are a little old-fashioned: there are iron chandeliers and big, high-backed chairs; amber table lamps and white linen; black cables snaking from amplifiers across a small stage. Pictures of the many Presidential candidates who have come here trolling for the Cuban vote are clustered on a wall by the door.

Now the heavy door of the restaurant opens, releasing a flat slab of light. Two, three, then a dozen men stroll into the foyer—elegant old lions, with slick gray hair and movie-mogul glasses and shirtsleeves shooting out of navy-blue blazer sleeves. Juan comes over to greet them, and then they saunter into the far room and prop their elbows on the end of the bar that is across from Juanito's model of the old Centro Vasco. These are members of the Vedado Tennis Club, which had been one of five exclusive clubs in Havana. Immediately after the revolution, the government took over the clubs and declared that from now on all Cuban citizens could use them, and just as immediately the club members left the country. Now the Vedado members meet for lunch on the first Friday of every month at Centro Vasco. Meanwhile, back in Havana, the old Vedado clubhouse is out of business—a stately wreck on a palm-shaded street.

The Vedado members order Scotch and Martinis and highballs. The bartender serving them left Cuba just three months ago. They themselves left the Vedado behind in 1959, and they are as embittered as if they'd left it yesterday. A television over the bar is tuned to CNN, and news about the easing of the Cuban embargo makes a blue flash on the screen.

A buoy-shaped man with a droopy face is standing at the other end of the bar. He is Santiago Reyes, who had been a minister in the Batista regime, the bartender tells me.

Santiago Reyes winks as I approach him, then kisses my hand and says, "My sincere pleasure, my dear." He bobs onto a bar stool. Four men quickly surround him, their faces turned and opened, like sunflowers. Santiago Reyes's words pour forth. It's Spanish, which I don't understand, but I hear a familiar word here and there: "embargo," "United States," "Miami," "Castro," "yesterday," "government," "Cuba," "Cuba," "Cuba." Across the room, the Vedado members chat in marbled voices. There are perhaps thirty-five of them here now, out of a total of a few hundred, and there will never be more. There has never been anything in my life that I couldn't go back to if I really wanted to. I ask if Little Havana is anything like the real Havana.

One gray head swivels. "Absolutely not at all," he says. "Miami was a shock when we got here. It was like a big farm. Plants. Bushes. It was quite something to see."

I say that I want to go to Havana.

"While you're there, shoot Fidel for me," the man says, smoothing the lapels of his blazer.

I say that I think I would be too busy.

He tips his head back and peers over the top of his glasses, measuring me. Then he says, "Find the time."

The tennis club sits down to *filete de mero Centro Vasco*. The food here is mostly Basque, not Cuban: *porrusalda* (Basque chicken-potato-and-leek soup), and *rabo encendido* (simmered oxtail), and *callos a la Vasca* (Basque tripe). Juanito made up the menu in Havana and brought it with him to Miami. It has hardly changed; the main exception is the addition of a vegetarian paella that the cook concocted for Madonna one night when she came here for a late dinner after performing in Miami.

I wander into the other dining room. At one table, Dr. Salvador Lew, of radio station WRHC, is having lunch with a couple who have recently recorded a collection of Latin-American children's music. They are talking and eating on the air—as Dr. Lew does with one or more different political or cultural guests every weekday. The live microphone is passed around the table, followed by the garlic bread. From one to two every day, at 1550 AM on the radio dial, you can experience hunger pangs.

Iñaki and Totty sit at a round table near Dr. Lew, having a lunch meeting with two Colombians. The four are discussing a plan to market the restaurant to Colombians, who are moving into the neighborhood in droves. More and more, the Cubans who left Havana after Castro's arrival are now leaving Little Havana, with its pink doll houses guarded by plaster lions, and its old shoebox-shaped apartment buildings hemmed in by sagging cyclone fences—Little Havana, which is nothing like big Havana. The prosperous Cubans are moving to the pretty streets off Ponce de Leon Boulevard, in Coral Gables, which looks like the elegant Miramar section of Havana; or to Kendall, near the newest, biggest Miami malls; or to breezy golf-course houses on Key Biscayne. Centro Vasco, which had been an amble from their front doors, and a home away from home, is now a fifteen-minute drive on a six-lane freeway—a home away from home away from home.

Totty and Iñaki think a lot about how to keep Centro Vasco going in the present. They have plans to open a Little Havana theme park behind the restaurant: there would be cigar and rum concessions and a huge map of Cuba, made out of Cuban soil, and a mural showing the names of American companies that want to do business in Cuba as soon as the embargo is lifted and Castro leaves. Totty and Iñaki have already added more live music on weekends in order to draw young people who were probably sick of hearing their parents talk about old Havana, and who otherwise might not want to spend time somewhere so sentimental and old-fashioned, so much part of another generation. Now performers like Albita and Malena Burke, another popular singer, draw them in. And even that has its ironies, because the music that Malena Burke and Albita perform here and have made so popular with young Cuban-Americans is *son* and *guajira* and *bolero*—the sentimental, old-fashioned music of the pre-revolutionary Cuban countryside. Totty and Iñaki have also come up with the idea that Centro Vasco ought to have a special Colombian day. As I sit down at their table, they and the Colombians are talking about something that ends with Iñaki saying, "Barbra Streisand, O.K., she has a great, great, great voice, but she doesn't dance! She just stands there!"

The Colombians nod.

"Anyway," Totty says, "for the special Colombian day we'll have a Colombian menu, we'll decorate, it'll be so wonderful."

GREAT DOG POEM NO. 1

(AFTER A LINE OF JOHN ASHBERY'S)

Before the tremendous dogs are unleashed,
Let's get the little ones inside, let's drag

The big bones onto the lawn and clean the Royal Dog Hotel.
You lied when you said the world was secretly glad

This would happen, that the end of the century
Called for no less. Even now, the music of dogs

Fills up the air. And look at that man on all fours
Dancing under the moon's dumbfounded gaze,

And look at that woman doing the same. The wave
Of the future has gotten to them, and they have responded

With all they have, O heavenly bodies that sway in the dark.
O bodies of time unfolding. O golden bodies of lasting fire.

—MARK STRAND

One of the Colombians clears his throat. He is as tanned as toast and has the kind of muscles you could bounce coins off. He says to Totty, "The perfect thing would be to do it on Cartagena Independence Day. We'll do a satellite feed of the finals from the Miss Colombia beauty pageant." He lifts his fork and pushes a clam around on his plate. "I think this will be very, very, very important to the community."

"Perfect," Totty says.

"We'll decorate," Iñaki says.

Totty says, "We'll make it so it will be just like home."

I TOLD everyone that I wanted to go to Havana. The place had hung over my shoulder ever since I got to Miami. What kind of place was it, that it could persist so long in memory, make people murderous, make them hungry, make them cry?

"If you go, then you should go to the restaurant and look at the murals," Iñaki said. "If they're still there. There's one of a little boy dressed up in a Basque costume. White shirt, black beret, little lace-up shoes. If it's still there. Who knows? Anyway, the little Basque boy was me."

Juan laughed when I said I was going. I asked what it had been like on the day Castro's people took the restaurant away, and he said, "I was working that day, and two guys came in. With briefcases. They said they were running the restaurant now. They wanted the keys to the safe, and then they gave me a receipt for the cash and said they'd call me. They didn't call."

Was he shocked?

"About them taking the restaurant? No. Not really. It was like dying. You know it's going to happen to you eventually—you just don't know exactly what day."

One night at dinner, I tried to persuade Jauretsi, Juan's youngest daughter, to go with me, and she said, "It would be a scandal, the daughter of Centro Vasco going to Cuba. Seriously, a scandal. No way." I was eating *zarzuela de mariscos*, a thick seafood stew, with Jauretsi, Totty, and Sara Ruiz, a friend of mine who left Cuba fifteen years ago. Juan came over to our table for a moment, between seating guests. All the tables were full now, and grave-faced, gray-haired, black-vested waiters were crashing through the kitchen doors backward, bearing their big trays. Five guys at the table beside us were eating paella and talking on cellular phones; a father was celebrating his son's having passed the bar exam; a thirtyish man was murmuring to his date. In the next room, the Capos' anniversary party was under way. There was a cake in the foyer depicting the anniversary couple in frosting—a huge sheet cake, as flat as a flounder except for the sugary mounds of the woman's bust and the man's frosting cigar. The guests were the next generation, whose fathers had been at the Bay of Pigs and who had never seen Cuba themselves. The women had fashionable haircuts and were carrying black quilted handbags with bright gold chains. The young men swarmed together in the hall, getting party favors—fat cigars, rolled by a silent man whose hands were mottled and tobacco-stained.

"If you go to Havana, see if the food is any good now," Juan said to me.

"I heard that there is only one dish on the menu each night," Totty said.

Sara, my émigré friend, said she used to go to Centro Vasco all the time after Castro took it over. Now she was eating a bowl of *caldo Gallego*, which she said she had hankered for ever since the Saizarbitorias' restaurant was taken away. "In the Havana Centro Vasco, the food isn't good anymore," she said. "It's no good. It's all changed." You have to pay for the food in United States dollars, not Cuban pesos, she said, but you don't have to leave a tip, because doing so is considered counter-revolutionary.

THE Basque boy is still there, in Havana. His white shirt is now the color of lemonade, though, because after the revolution the murals on the walls of Centro Vasco were covered with a layer of yellowish varnish to preserve the old paint.

My waiter in Havana remembered Juanito. "He left on a Thursday," the waiter said. "He told me about it on a Wednesday. I was at the restaurant working that day." I was at Centro Vasco, sitting at a huge round table with a Cuban friend of Sara's, eating the *caldo Gallego* that made everybody so homesick, but, just as I'd been warned, it wasn't the same. The waiter whispered, "We need a Basque in the kitchen, but we don't

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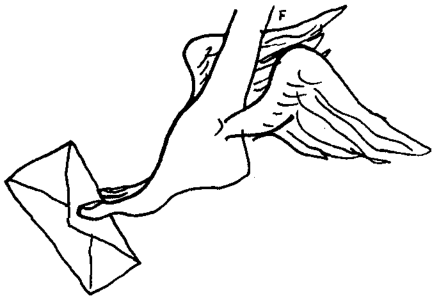
have any Basques left," and then he took the soup away. The restaurant looks exactly like Juanito's model—a barnlike Moorish-style building, with an atrium entryway. The government has had it for thirty-five years now and has left it just as Juanito left it, with a fish tank and a waterfall in the foyer, and, inside, thronelike brown chairs, and cool tile floors, and the murals—Basques playing jai alai and rowing sculls and hoisting boulders and herding sheep—wrapping the room. As I had been told, business is done in dollars. People with dollars in Cuba are either tourists or Cubans who have some business on the black market or abroad. When my new Cuban friend and I came in, a Bruce Willis movie was blaring from the television in the bar. At a table on one side of ours, a lone Nicaraguan businessman with clunky black eyeglasses was poking his spoon into a flan, and at the table on our other side a family of eight were singing and knocking their wine goblets together to celebrate the arrival of one of them from Miami that very day.

I myself had been in Havana for two days. On the first, I went to the old Centro Vasco, where Juanito had started: not the place where he had moved the restaurant when it became prosperous, the one he'd built a model of to hang over the Miami bar, but the original one—a wedge-shaped white building on the wide road that runs along Havana's waterfront. The wedge building had been Havana's Basque center—the *centro Vasco*—and it had had jai-alai courts and lodgings and a dining room, and Juanito, the pretend world-famous jai-alai player, had started his cooking career by making meals for the Basques who came.

That was years ago now, and the place is not the same. My new friend drove me there, and we parked and walked along the building's long, blank eastern side. It was once an elegant, filigreed building. Now its ivory paint was peeling off in big, plate-size pieces, exposing one or two or three other colors of paint. Near the door, I saw something on the sidewalk that looked like a soggy paper bag. Close up, I saw that it was a puddle of brown blood and a goat's head, with a white striped muzzle and tiny, pearly teeth. My friend gasped, and said that it was probably a Santería ritual offering, common in the countryside but hardly ever seen on a city street. We looked at it for a moment. A few cars muttered by. I felt a little woozy. The heat was pressing on my head like a foot on a gas pedal, and the goat was pretty well cooked.

Inside the building, there were burst-open bags of cement mix, two-by-fours, bricks, rubble. An old barber chair. A fat, friendly, shirtless man shoring up a doorway. On the wall beside him were a mural of Castro wearing a big hat and, above that, a scene from the first day of the revolution, showing Castro and his comrades wading ashore from a cabin cruiser. This room had been the old Centro Vasco's kitchen, and its dining room had been upstairs. Now the whole building is a commissary, where food is prepared, and is then sent on to a thousand people working for the government's Construction Ministry.

After a minute, a sub-director in the Ministry stepped through the rubble—a big, bearish man with shaggy blond hair and an angelic face. He said the workers' lunch today had been fish with tomato sauce, bologna, boiled bananas, and rice and black beans. He wanted us to come upstairs to see where the old Centro Vasco dining room had been, and as we made our way there he told us that it had been divided into a room for his office and a room where the workers' gloves are made and their shoes are repaired. He had eaten there when it was the old Centro Vasco, he added. It had had a great view, and now, standing at his desk, we could see the swooping edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the hulking crenellated Morro Castle, the narrow neck of the Bay of Havana, the wide coastal road, the orange-haired hookers who loll on the low gray breakwater, and then acres and acres of smooth blue water shining like chrome in the afternoon light. The prettiness of the sight made us all quiet, and then the sub-director said he had heard that some Spanish investors were thinking of buying the building and turning it back into a restaurant. "It's a pity the way it is now," he said. "It was a wonderful place."



That night, my friend and I ate dinner at a *paladar*, a kind of private café that Cubans are now permitted to own and operate, provided that it has no more than twelve chairs and four tables and is in their home. This one was in a narrow house in Old Havana, and the kitchen was the kitchen of the house, and the tables and the chairs were set in the middle of the living room. The owner was a stained-glass artist by trade, and he sat on a sofa near our table and chatted while we ate. He said that he loved the restaurant business, and that he and his wife were doing so well that they could hardly wait until the government permitted more chairs, because they were ready to buy them.

I WENT back to Centro Vasco one more time before leaving Cuba—not the old place, in the wedge building, but the new, Moorish one, in a section of Havana called Vedado, which is now a jumble of houses and ugly new hotels but for decades had been a military installation. I wanted to go once more to be sure I'd remember it, because I didn't know if I'd ever be back again. I went with my new friend and her husband, who was sentimental about the restaurant in the Vedado, because during the revolution he had fought just down the street from it. While he was driving us to Centro Vasco, he pointed to where he'd been stationed, saying, "Right—here! Oh, it was wonderful! I was preparing a wonderful catapult mechanism to launch hand grenades." In front of the restaurant someone had parked a milky-white 1957 Ford Fairlane, and some little boys were horsing around near it. On the sidewalk, four men were playing dominoes at a bowlegged table, and the *clack, clack* of the tiles sounded like the tapping of footsteps on the street. The same apologetic waiter was in the dining room, and he brought us plates of *gambas a la plancha* and *pollo frito con mojo criollo* and *tortilla Centro Vasco.* The restaurant was nearly empty. The manager came and stood proudly by our table, and so did the busboys and the other waiters and a heavy woman in a kitchen uniform who had been folding a huge stack of napkins while watching us eat. Toward the end of the meal, someone came in and warned us that our car was going to be lifted and carried away. I thought he meant that it was being stolen, but he meant that it was being relocated: Castro would be driving by soon, and, because he was worried about car bombs, he became nervous if he saw cars parked on the street.

As we were leaving, the waiter stopped us at the door. He had a glossy eight-by-ten he wanted to show me—a glamorous-looking photograph of Juan, Jr.,'s wedding. He said that it was his favorite keepsake. The Saizarbitorias had left nearly everything behind when they left Cuba. Juan was allowed to take only a little bit of money and three changes of clothes. In Miami, Juan's daughter Mirentxu had remarked to me on how strange it was to have so few family mementos and scrapbooks and pictures—it was almost as if the past had never taken place. I admired the wedding picture for a minute. Then the waiter and I talked a little about old Juanito. I couldn't tell whether the waiter knew that Juanito had died, so I didn't say anything. Meanwhile, he told me that a friend of his had once sent him a napkin from Centro Vasco in Miami, and he had saved it. He said, "I've had so many feelings over these years, but I never imagined that Juanito would never come back."

THERE had been one other Centro Vasco, but it wasn't possible for me to visit it. It had been the first Centro Vasco that Juanito opened in the United States, on the corner of Ponce de Leon and Douglas Road, in a building that straddled the border between Miami and Coral Gables—a place that might have been satisfactory except that the two cities had different liquor laws. If you wanted a drink, you had to be sure to get a table on the Miami side. The border had come to be too much trouble, so Juanito moved to Southwest Eighth Street, and eventually the old building was torn down.

But I did go back to the Centro Vasco on Southwest Eighth one more time after I came back from Cuba. It was a Saturday night, and it was busy: people were coming for dinner and to hear Malena Burke sing. I wanted to tell the Saizarbitorias about my trip, to tell them that the Basque boy was still there and that the food wasn't very good, but that the restaurant was just as they had left it and, in spite of the thirty-three years that had passed, was still in fine shape. Then I realized that I didn't know whether they would be glad or sorry about what I would tell them. In Havana, everyone I met talked constantly about the future, about what might happen when the United States lifted its embargo and when Castro retired, both of which events they expected soon. To the people I met in Cuba, the present seemed provisional and the past nearly forgotten, and their yearning was keen—charged with anticipation. In Miami, the present moment is satisfying, and thought is given to the future, but the past seems like the richest place—frequently visited, and as familiar and real and comforting as an old family home.

The music wasn't to start until after midnight, so for a long time I stood in the foyer and watched people parade in: the executive of a Latin-American television network, in a tight white suit and high white shoes; an editor from a Spanish soap-opera magazine; a Puerto Rican singer who had just performed at Dade County Auditorium, followed by her entourage; another singer, named Franco, who called out to someone while he and I were talking, "Hey, man, you look great! I thought you were dead!"; and dozens of good-looking couples speaking in bubbly Spanish, and all wearing something that glistened or sparkled or had a satiny shine. Toward midnight, Sherman Hemsley, of "The Jeffersons," came in with a television producer, and Iñaki wrote "Cherman Jemsli Del Show Los Jeffersons" on a little slip of paper for Malena, so that when she pointed him out in the audience she'd know what to say.

Malena came onstage at one in the morning. She began with a ballad that had been made famous in Cuba in the fifties by a singer called La Lupe, who used to get so emotional when she reached the crescendo that she hurled things at the audience—usually her shoes and her wig. The room had been roaring before Malena came out, but now it was hushed. Malena had left Cuba just a few months earlier. Someone told me that the tears she sheds when she's singing about lost love are really real. By then, I was sitting at a table in the back of the room with Totty. I had some snapshots with me that I had taken in Havana for the family, because I'd thought they might like to see the old home again. Just as I was about to slide the pictures across the table to Totty, the singer sobbed to her crescendo, so I decided to wait until another day. ♦

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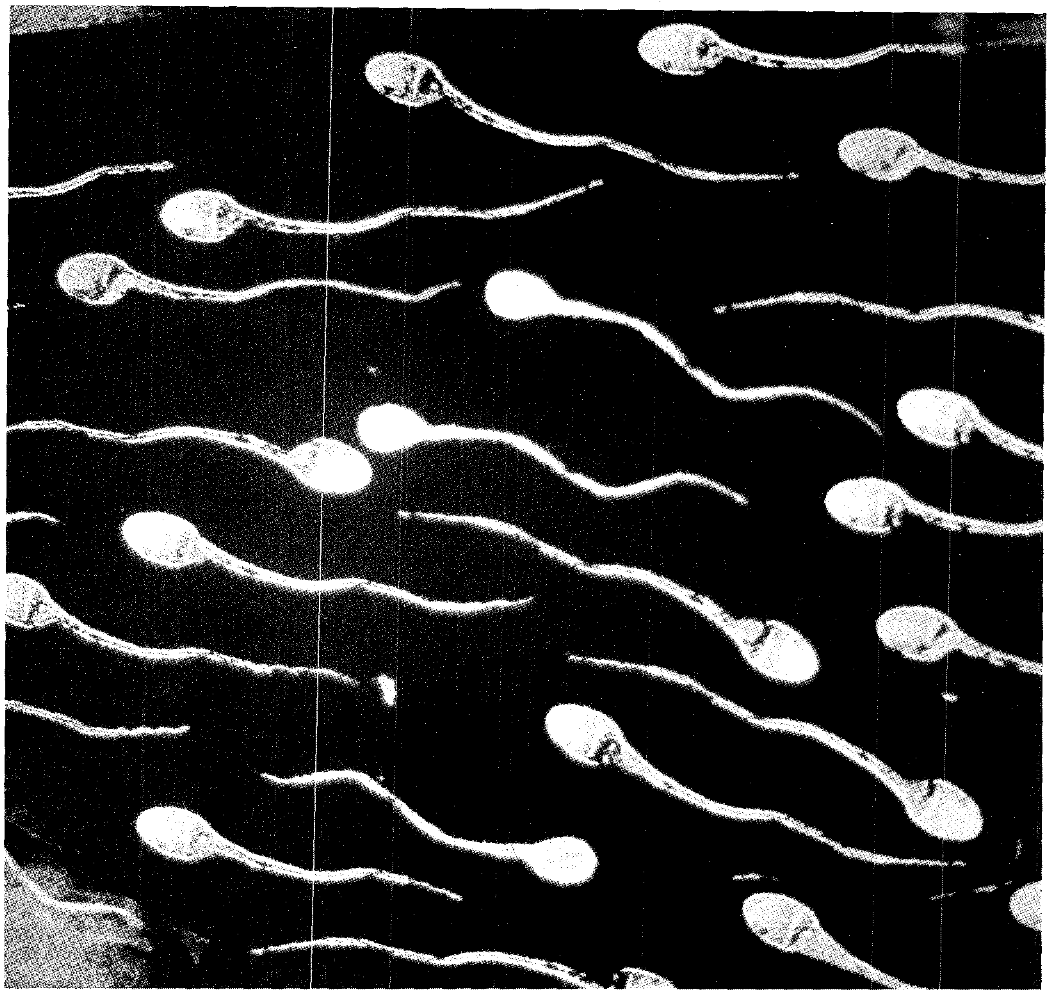


HOWARD SOCHUREK/MEDICHROME

A REPORTER AT LARGE

SILENT SPERM

How serious are the reports of the increase in male infertility? And if the environment is the problem, are any men anywhere safe? The author consults international experts on a growing scientific controversy.

BY LAWRENCE WRIGHT

A TEST TUBE of human ejaculate is a modest sight. The normal fertile male's contribution to the human-reproduction process is about three millilitres of semen—less than a teaspoonful—which may contain between twenty million and three hundred million sperm per millilitre. Semen, the milky-yellowish matrix that sperm swim in, is a rich tonic of Vitamin C, sugar, and certain proteins, enzymes, and alkaline substances, which protect the sperm against the acid environment of the vagina. To estimate the number of sperm in a millilitre of semen, a technician puts a drop of semen on a slide and, looking through his microscope, counts the sperm within a representative sector. The procedure is similar to the way the National Parks Service uses aerial photographs to approximate the size of crowds.

Recently, both the quantity and the quality of the human sperm population have come into question. Although a decline in the sperm count has been noted before, in one part of the world or another—and generally dismissed—several new studies report a high proportion of damaged or misshapen sperm and depressed sperm counts in many countries. The apparent drop in the sperm count is so sudden and steep that it has caused some scientists to wonder whether the human species is approaching a fertility crisis. Their views have been amplified in a number of alarming articles in the press, and have set off a fierce debate that rages in scientific journals and conferences around the world. Some scientists are calling for bans on chemicals that may inhibit sperm production; others claim that there is not yet enough evidence even to know whether the sperm count is actually declining, much less that the human race is edging toward extinction.

The current concern is complicated by the fact that in the past the preponderance of research on human reproduction has focussed on the female, for the obvious reason that women bear the children, and also because it was thought that men are not usually the source of infertility in a relationship. Andrology, which is the study of male reproductive disorders, is a new and still small field. It is largely populated by doctors who were trained as gynecologists, for whom men are simply an adjunct to their main interest, or by pediatricians who became interested in males because they treat various problems of infant boys.

A woman produces a single egg every month, whereas a healthy young man produces more than a thousand sperm per second. This superabundance of sperm might seem to be one of nature's extravaganzas, because, in theory, only one sperm is required to fertilize an egg. In practice, however, men whose sperm count falls below twenty million per millilitre have reduced fertility, and those whose count drops below five million are often sterile.

One might imagine a hundred million sperm let loose in a single ejaculation as a sort of tadpole stampede, but a stampede is more orderly than the actual process of fertilization, which could perhaps be better understood as a hundred million tails looking for a hidden donkey. Sperm appear to move about entirely at random, and that presumably accounts for the need to have such a vast invasion. Out of those hundred million sperm, only about a hundred thousand stumble through the vaginal canal into the oviduct, despite urging by orgasmic contractions, which nature seems to have intended to help shepherd the sperm into the proper chute. A few dozen may finally reach the egg, but there must be one with enough vitality to bore a hole in the zona pellucida, a membrane that helps keep the egg intact. Obviously, then, the odds against any one sperm's reaching its goal are so overwhelming that casualties or greatly reduced numbers imperil the process. It takes a healthy army to achieve conception.

IN 1990, a Danish pediatric endocrinologist named Niels E. Skakkebæk set up a department at the National University Hospital in Copenhagen to study the poorly understood phenomenon of male infertility and children's growth disorders. A quiet, physically fit man with skeptical hazel eyes, Skakkebæk, who is fifty-nine, gained a wide reputation for his brilliant studies of testicular cancer in the nineteen-seventies. In the last fifty years, there has been a startling rise in this formerly rare disease—which is particularly common in Denmark, where nearly one out of a hundred men are afflicted with it. Skakkebæk demonstrated that cells similar to precursor testicular-cancer cells can be found even in germ cells of aborted fetuses, indicating that the cancer might be caused by some prenatal event, although the disease doesn't ripen into its pathological state until after puberty. In his pediatric practice, Skakkebæk was seeing many boys with malformations of their genitals, and other boys whose testicles had not descended; in fact, a 1984 study of two thousand Danish schoolboys found that seven per cent of them had one or both testicles lodged inside their bodies—a condition that may lead to sterility and a higher risk of testicular cancer. "They were small pieces of evidence that suggested that there was a problem," Skakkebæk recalls. "We had also been wondering why it was so difficult for sperm banks to establish a core of donors. In some areas of Denmark, they were having to recruit ten potential donors to find one with good semen quality."

Skakkebæk and his colleagues decided to study the sperm of Danish men. They looked first at men who were working in nonhazardous office jobs and at laborers who did not work directly with industrial chemicals or pesticides. Such men, Skakkebæk thought, would provide a healthy baseline against which more risky populations of men could be measured. But these supposedly healthy men proved to have surprisingly low-quality sperm. For decades, it had been believed that the average man produced about a hundred million sperm per millilitre, and of that about twenty per cent was expected to be immobile. Roughly forty per cent was abnormal—having two heads or no tail, for instance, or being shaped like a cigar or an overinflated balloon. The only other mammals with similar high rates of mutated sperm are some endangered felines, like the cheetah. Skakkebæk's study, however, revealed a situation that was far worse than what he had anticipated—that eighty-four per cent of the men had sperm quality below the already dismal standards set by the World Health Organization. The men themselves seemed normal in every other respect.

Skakkebæk was not the first to discover that there was something wrong with the sperm population. In 1974, a provocative study had been done by C. M. Kinloch Nelson and Raymond G. Bunge at the University of Iowa. The two physicians had become concerned about the number of patients coming to them for infertility evaluations. In the past, sperm counts had generally been conducted among men who were in infertile relationships—in other words, men who were more likely to have low sperm counts than the average man. Nelson and Bunge decided to look at the semen quality of men who were about to undergo vasectomies, and were presumably above average in fertility, since most of those who had been accepted for vasectomies at the clinic had fathered two or more children.

The Nelson and Bunge study reads like a casualty report from some devastating battlefront. In the three hundred and eighty-six fertile men they examined, the average sperm concentration was only forty-eight million per millilitre, and a scant seven per cent of the men had concentrations above a hundred million—the figure that the previous generation had declared to be average among fertile men. When Nelson and Bunge looked back at the records of men who had come to the hospital twenty years before for infertility evaluations, they found that a large proportion of these supposedly infertile men in the nineteen-fifties had higher sperm counts than the fertile men seeking vasectomies in the seventies. "Something has altered the fertile male population to depress the semen analysis remarkably," the two physicians warned in their final report. "This is obviously speculative, but the overall decrease in the sperm concentration and the semen volumes would tend to incriminate an environmental factor to which the entire population has been exposed."

After the publication of this report, other studies, in Philadelphia and Houston, also found low sperm counts and poor semen quality. These reports awakened the interest of John MacLeod, an eminent anatomist who had retired from the Cornell University Medical College in 1972. Although semen analysis had been used to evaluate male fertility since the late twenties, it was MacLeod's work in the fifties that set the modern standards for fertility and semen quality. Nelson and Bunge were suggesting that those standards could no longer be met. This was a daring challenge to the medical orthodoxy of the time, since the elderly MacLeod was an august figure in the field: "the king of spermatology" is how Niels Skakkebæk remembers him. In 1979, MacLeod and his colleague Ying Wang published a lengthy critique of the work of Nelson and Bunge. While observing that the sperm counts of fertile males had shown a general decline since the thirties, when the average count in one New York study was a hundred and thirty-seven million per millilitre, MacLeod and Wang argued that there was no reason to accept the notion of a larger, over-all decline. They reported that their own studies showed no corresponding drop among men in childless relationships. Therefore, they reasoned, the apparent decline among fertile men was due to analytical error on the part of the investigators.

Like most people in the field, Niels Skakkebæk regarded MacLeod's conclusions as definitive, and so the subject of declining sperm counts disappeared from mainstream scientific discussion for more than a decade—until 1992, when Skakkebæk and his Danish colleagues decided to review all published studies of sperm counts around the world. Sixty-one studies were included in their survey—which was published in the *British Medical Journal*—going back as far as 1938 and involving a total of about fifteen thousand men with no history of infertility. Although the average sperm count varied from country to country, the clear trend was toward lower sperm counts in the present. The three Danish studies represented in the survey traced a decline in the average sperm count from eighty-six million per millilitre in 1944 to fifty-nine million in 1990. The United States, which provided most of the data, had a similar over-all decline.

On the basis of the findings of the world literature, Skakkebæk computed that the average sperm count in 1940 was about a hundred and thirteen million per millilitre, and that fifty years later it had fallen to sixty-six million. Moreover, the quantity of semen produced in the average ejaculation had also dropped significantly, and thus the total sperm count was even lower than the drop in concentration had indicated. Still more serious was a threefold increase in men whose sperm count was below twenty million—the point at which their fertility would be jeopardized. "Sperm density has declined appreciably during 1938-1990, although we cannot conclude whether this decline is continuing," Skakkebæk and his colleagues wrote in their report. The Danish researchers linked the falling sperm count to the rise in testicular cancers and other abnormalities that had been found in the male reproductive organs, and they speculated that the results might reflect a widespread reduction in male fertility. Something that was not mentioned in their report—but could scarcely go unremarked upon by anyone reading it—was what would inevitably happen if the sperm count declined further.

ARE young men really less fertile than their elders were? Unfortunately, Skakkebæk's survey is not able to answer this question definitively, since most of the studies in question recorded only the year of ejaculation, not the age of the individual men at the time that the samples were taken. A study conducted in 1962, for instance, might have included men who were born over a period of four, or even five, decades, and thus twenty-year-olds and sixty-year-olds might well have been lumped in the same pile of data.

Skakkebæk and his colleagues represented their findings in the form of a graph that showed the worldwide sperm count over the past fifty years in a straight-line decline—like a ski slope. Their methodology, however, quickly came under fire from scientists, some of whom argued that another way of visualizing the sperm count was as a "Niagara Falls" graph—one that manifested a single, sudden drop in the nineteen-sixties and a levelling off thereafter. If that picture was accurate, then whatever event had caused the decline was probably over, and now the sperm count might actually be making a recovery. Other scientists argued that the counts in the past were artificially high. In any case, though, the fact was that the number of morphologically normal sperm produced by the average man had dropped below the level of those of a hamster, which has testicles a fraction the size of a man's.

Another criticism, which will be advanced in a spring issue of the medical journal *Fertility and Sterility*, argues that the high sperm counts reported in the United States in the past come from regions where the counts are still quite high. Harry Fisch, the director of the Male Reproductive Center at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, looked at three areas, including New York City, Los Angeles, and Roseville, Minnesota. He found that there had been an actual increase in the sperm counts in the last twenty-five years, but there were significant differences in the count among the three locations. The count in New York was 131.5 million, in Minnesota 100.8 million, but in California only 72.7 million. Fisch claims that his work refutes the whole notion of a decline in the world's sperm count, but he says that he is prevented from discussing the data prior to publication. Although it is true that a few studies have shown no decline over time in some areas, or even increases, a number of other studies document sharp drops in the sperm counts within particular populations in Belgium, Scotland, and London. The majority of the evidence points to a widespread decline in the sperm count, with significant regional differences that no one can explain.

If there is such a genuine decline, there *should* be a corresponding decrease in fertility. In the United States, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of infertile couples has risen from 14.4 in 1965 to 18.5 in 1995. (In forty to fifty per cent of the cases, the male partners have been the source of the infertility.) But all measurements of fertility in human beings are unreliable, because it is difficult to judge the importance of life-style choices, such as waiting until relatively late in life to try to begin a family. It is clear that more and more couples are seeking infertility treatments or in-vitro fertilization using the semen of anonymous donors. But in the United States, just as in Denmark, the number of donors with good-quality sperm has become distressingly low. As early as 1981, researchers at the Washington Fertility Study Center reported that the sperm count of their donors, who were largely medical students, had suffered a steady decline over the previous eight years. The researchers worried that, if the decline continued at the same rate, there would be within the next decade no potential donors who could meet the approved or recommended standards.

After the Skakkebæk findings came out, various other researchers around the world began to publish new data about sperm counts. There has been little published research comparing racial and ethnic sperm counts, particularly in Africa and many Third World countries. But the studies that we do have show low counts nearly everywhere: the latest count in Nigeria is sixty-four million per millilitre; in Pakistan, seventy-nine and a half million; in Germany, seventy-eight million; in Hong Kong, sixty-two million. In Belgium, scientists note not only a substantial drop in the average count but also a far more disturbing fall in the percentage of healthy, motile sperm.

One of the scientific detractors who saw significant flaws in the Skakkebæk survey was Pierre Jouannet, a reproductive biologist, who is the director of the Centre d'Étude et de Conservation des Oeufs et du Sperme, at the Hôpital Cochin, in Paris. "In my lab, we always had the idea that there was no decline of sperm characteristics," he recently told me. Jouannet's sperm bank had several features that made it ideal for a controlled study. In contrast to the Skakkebæk survey, which had looked at different populations all over the world (reported on by scientists whose methodology had varied from one study to another) and had included both fertile and unfertile men, Jouannet and his co-workers at the Paris sperm bank had been using exactly the same procedures for twenty years; moreover, they had been testing a constant, homogeneous population—healthy, unpaid volunteers, who contributed their semen anonymously for the purposes of artificial insemination. Thirteen hundred and fifty-one men were included in the study, and each of them had previously fathered at least one child; in other words, they were men of proved fertility. Thanks to the French penchant for bureaucratic record-keeping, an impressive store of information had accumulated, and Jouannet and his colleagues believed that it would effectively overturn the hypothesis of a general decline in the quality and quantity of sperm—at least, in Paris. He was confident that the flag of French manhood was still flying high.

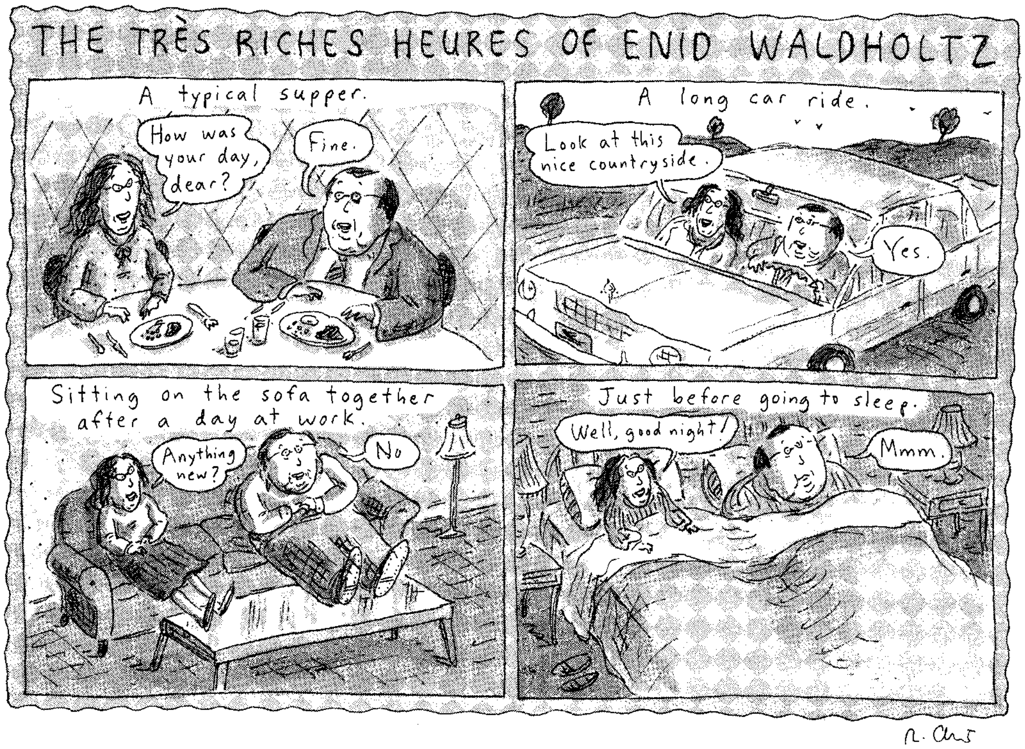
And so, in 1993, when the French researchers analyzed their data they were astonished to discover that the concentration of sperm had actually declined on average more than two per cent a year—from eighty-nine million in 1973 to sixty million in 1992. The quality of the sperm had also deteriorated, they found. It was possible, of course, that this drop might have been simply a consequence of life-style changes. For example, wasn't it likely that young French men were having sex more often than their fathers had? In that event, their sperm counts would register at somewhat lower levels, because they hadn't had enough time to recharge. But in fact the average number of sex acts per month—about 9.3 for a twenty-five-year-old French man—had not changed during that time. Jouannet and his colleagues created a subset of men who were in the same age range at the time of their donation and who had been abstinent for three or four days. Among this group, he discovered that the drop in the sperm count was even greater—3.7 per cent a year. The expected sperm count for a Parisian man born in 1945 was a hundred and two million, whereas the count of a man born in 1962 was exactly half that number. The lower sperm counts of Parisian men may be caused by environmental conditions or events of decades ago, so that boys born now could mature with higher sperm counts than their fathers. On the other hand, if the decline were to continue at the same rate, Jouannet says gravely, "it will take seventy or eighty years before it goes to zero."

"THE sample comes in in the morning, and the first thing we do is establish the conventional criteria—measurements of ejaculate volume, sperm count, and motility," Stewart Irvine, a gynecologist at the Medical Research Council's Reproductive Biology Unit in Edinburgh, said as he took me through his reproductive-biology lab. "The next thing we do is process the sample in such a way as to separate the sperm from the stuff that it's ejaculated in." After stripping away the cloudy seminal matrix, Irvine's technicians are left with a pale-gray spot at the bottom of the test tube—a pure suspension of human sperm, like an effervescent drop of 7UP.

Irvine put a slide of purified sperm into the maw of a contraption called a Computer-Assisted Sperm Analyzer, or CASA. "This box contains a microscope, an image frame-storer, and a microcomputer," Irvine said. The machine made a shuddering noise as it loaded the slide, and then there appeared on the computer monitor an image that looked like a pond of jostling catfish. Active sperm left a green wake on the screen, but there were also numerous red dots where the computer had identified immobile sperm. "By measuring the length of the track, you can tell how fast a sperm is swimming, and by measuring its wobble from side to side you can tell how much propulsive force it generates," Irvine said. "A sperm is like a boat with one oar. Let's see if I can catch that one."

He clicked on a wildly thrashing specimen, which to my eye was shimmying

"So what'll it be tonight—pig in or pig out?"


THE TRÈS RICHES HEURES OF ENID WALDHOLTZ
A typical supper.
How was your day, dear?
Fine.
A long car ride.
Look at this nice countryside.
Yes.
Sitting on the sofa together after a day at work.
Anything new?
No
Just before going to sleep.
Well, good night!
Mmm.
R. Chast

aimlessly across the screen. "This demonstrates quite clearly the sort of patterns that you see—this beautiful oscillatory movement," he said. "From previous work that we've done, we know that these sperm tend to do quite well in achieving pregnancies, because they've got good propulsive force. They penetrate barriers, and so on, whereas these sperm"—Irvine pointed to a sperm that was moving in a more ploddingly straightforward manner—"don't have much force behind them when it comes to knocking the door down, so to speak. Damn, look at that other one! A hundred and ninety microns a second! If you put your ear to the dish, you can hear the crack as he breaks the sound barrier."

Sperm are difficult to study, because they are so dynamic and are hypersensitive to change. The nurseries where the sperm are hatched are called Sertoli cells. The more Sertoli cells a man has, the larger his testicles, and the more sperm he can produce. It takes seventy-two days for the germ cells to mature into streamlined adult sperm, complete with head, midpiece, and whiplike tail. The head carries the payload—a compressed molecular dollop of DNA—surrounded by a helmet of enzymes that will help it break down the wall of the egg. The midpiece of the sperm appears to be little more than a helix of mitochondria—a cell's power stations—wrapped around the axial filaments like a ribbon around a Maypole. In January of last year, researchers at Johns Hopkins discovered receptors on the sperm midpiece which resembled the receptors our cells use to detect certain smells. Apparently, the egg emits a weak bouquet, which lures the nosy sperm into the oviduct. The tail is one long, snapping filament. Altogether, the sperm is an elegant testament to form following function. It is pure purposefulness—the male animal refined into a single-celled, highly perishable posterity-seeking rocket.

Like many scientists, Irvine had his doubts about the Skakkebæk survey when it was first published, but he happened to be conducting a study of Scottish males, and in the course of it he found that men born in the forties had an average sperm count of a hundred and twenty-eight million, whereas those born in the second half of the nineteen-sixties averaged only seventy-five million—a decline of more than forty per cent in a single generation. "In our population, we see an absolutely straight slope down," Irvine said. "I had a colleague visiting from Australia, and he had with him a laptop computer with lots of data from infertile Australian couples. He said, 'I'm sure these sperm-count drops are rubbish. I'm sure there are other explanations for it.' And I said, 'Well, just take your data and plot it by year of birth and see what you get.' He got the same result."

Irvine argues that in achieving pregnancy the quality of the sperm is more important than the quantity. But, according to most recent reports, the ranks of the average army of sperm are increasingly filled with damaged and unmotivated individuals. It's especially shocking when one compares the sperm of humans with that of other mammals. A bull with a five-per-cent abnormality rate in its sperm would be shunned for breeding and turned into hamburger, but a man with those numbers could boast of being a splendid rarity.

Apart from his other failings, the human male is one of the least efficient of all sperm-producing mammals. A rabbit produces twenty-five million sperm per gram of its testicle weight every day, whereas a man produces little more than four million. Other primates, like the rhesus monkey, which is less than half the size of man but has testicles fifty per cent larger, generate sperm nearly six times as efficiently—more than a billion sperm a day, compared with a hundred and thirty million for the average man. One shouldn't even discuss the boar and the ram.

If the human sperm count is declining, what could cause such a phenomenon? There is no one widely accepted theory. Instead, there is a bewildering array of hypothetical culprits, which range from the residues of birth-control pills in drinking water to the stress of urban living.

From the sperm's perspective, modern life abounds with perils. Common antibiotics like penicillin and tetracycline can wipe out a sperm harvest. Tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol can affect spermatogenesis. The effects of these chemicals are usually limited to a brief period following a man's exposure to them; a man who stops smoking marijuana will probably see an improvement in the quality of his sperm within a few months. The testes are acutely sensitive to X rays; even a modest exposure can dampen sperm production for months. Chlamydia is a fertility-impairing venereal disease, and viruses like mumps and chicken pox can also devastate sperm counts. Men who work in indoor car-parking facilities, or spend a lot of time driving in tunnels, where they inhale lead-laden gasoline fumes, risk lower counts, as do agricultural workers who handle certain pesticides. One chemical in particular, dibromochloropropane, or DBCP, causes sterility, and has been banned in the United States. But it continued to be used as a pesticide in a number of other countries. DBCP has allegedly caused epidemics of childlessness among plantation workers.

In 1987, before the current discussion about declining sperm counts began, a group of scientists led by Ralph C. Dougherty, a professor of chemistry at Florida State University, attempted to correlate the drop in sperm counts with a number of variables. There seemed to be no link with such things as mean annual temperature, altitude, population density, or atmospheric radiation. The researchers did find that lower sperm counts were strongly correlated with an area's production of synthetic chemicals, number of automobile registrations, and consumption of meat, fat, and alcohol. More recently, scientists in Finland have found that men with high sperm counts tend to be better educated and to have more money than men with lower counts.

Urban living seems to lead to lower sperm counts. In part, it has been suggested, that may be because men who sit for long periods of time at a desk or behind a steering wheel tend to overheat their testicles, and that lowers their sperm count—just as a hot bath or a high fever will do. "One or two studies looked into underwear styles, and another implicated bicycle riding," Skakkebæk recalls disparagingly. "It was completely ridiculous. Danes have been riding bicycles for years. You don't get undescended testicles from riding bicycles. Tight underwear could never cause the increased problem of testicular cancer."

Stress may adversely affect sperm production. John MacLeod, in his many studies of semen among various populations, found one group with "phenomenally high" sperm counts: long-term prisoners. "One can only speculate why this should be so," MacLeod wrote in 1973. He pointed out that despite the violence that one associates with imprisonment, the life of long-term prisoners is well regulated and relatively stress-free. "They tend to be sequestered from many infectious agents as well as from the pressure to accomplish and to make daily decisions," he wrote. "They are reasonably active physically and keep regular hours." MacLeod theorized that this kind of highly regimented life had a beneficial effect on spermatogenesis. One of the prisoners whom MacLeod examined produced as many as two and a half billion sperm per ejaculation.

Skakkebæk believes that the real source of the problem is much more ominous than the stresses of modern life. He sees the decline in the sperm count as only one part of a larger assault on the male reproductive organs, which is characterized by high rates of testicular cancer, undescended testicles, and hypospadias, a condition in which the urethral opening is on the underside of the penis, not on the tip. Whatever is happening to men, he believes, some part of it must take place during the early stages of human development—in the womb or else shortly after birth—because damage to the male urogenital system is evident even in certain very young patients. Changes in life style won't help men whose sperm-producing capacity has been crippled at birth.

In Skakkebæk's opinion, the most likely villains are chemicals in the environment which masquerade as estrogen, the female hormone. These chemicals, which can have a temporary effect on adults, can cause permanent damage in boys whose sexual organs are not yet fully developed. There is a provocative model for this theory in the children of mothers who had taken diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic estrogen that from the nineteen-forties to the early seventies was widely prescribed in the United States because it was thought to prevent miscarriage. A small number of the daughters of these women developed an extremely rare form of vaginal cancer at a surprisingly early age. By the time doctors stopped prescribing it, two to three million American women were estimated to have received the drug, even though there was never any evidence that it prevented miscarriage. Some of the estimated one million sons of these DES mothers also developed alarming problems, including not only low sperm counts but also undescended testicles and deformations of the penis—many of the same problems that were later found in Danish males.

DES has now been banned in most countries. "What we didn't know historically is what the level of exposure was in the rest of the world," Richard M. Sharpe, who is a research physiologist with the Medical Research Council in Edinburgh, told me. "There were many in the United States but relatively few in Britain."

Sharpe had known Niels Skakkebæk since 1975, when the Danish scientist was conducting a study in the onset of spermatogenesis in Scottish boys. In 1991, Skakkebæk revealed to Sharpe his findings about the dramatic worldwide drop in the sperm count. "Had it been anyone but Niels, I would have discounted it," Sharpe said. "But Niels is so careful, I knew he must be on to something."

Sharpe began to search for sources of estrogens in the environment that might disrupt the body's hormonal balance in the ways Skakkebæk had been observing. He learned that many different synthetic estrogens are still commonly used as growth promoters for livestock. These also produce meat that is as much as twenty per cent lower in fat. "And this is why there is an enormous industry out there for using estrogens as growth promoters in domestic animals," Sharpe said. "There's hardly an animal alive that's not treated in that way."

Late one Friday afternoon, a colleague suggested to Sharpe that an obvious source of estrogen in infants was powdered milk. Mothers around the world were increasingly using formulas instead of breast milk to feed their babies. In addition to the synthetic hormones that might be present in livestock, cows were more likely than in the past to be milked while they were still in calf—that is, when the levels of their natural hormones were extremely high. Sharpe spent the entire weekend fretting over the awesome responsibility of condemning cow's milk and possibly setting off a worldwide panic. On Monday morning, he telephoned a professor at Cambridge who had done experiments on milk, and learned that the higher levels of estrogen simply weren't present once the milk had been powdered before being blended into baby formula. Sharpe was terrifically relieved, but it left open the mysterious question of where all the estrogen had gone.

Like Skakkebæk, Sharpe thinks that the decline in sperm is linked to some event that affects the endocrine system, which governs the body's hormones. This must happen, he believes, either in the womb or shortly after birth. "I have absolutely no doubt this is the most important time in your life, certainly if you're a male," Sharpe said. "This is when your sperm-producing capacity as an adult is settled once and for all." Sharpe believes that if even a small amount of an extraneous synthetic estrogen slips across the mother's placental boundary at a critical moment and invades the body of a developing fetus, it can have a devastating impact on male sexual development.

Sharpe tested this assumption by introducing minute quantities of DES and several other synthetic estrogens into the drinking water of pregnant rats. "We were looking for small effects," Sharpe said. "What we found is that rats exposed during gestation and lactation via the pregnant mother reveal when they grow up that their sperm production is reduced by anything from five to fifteen per cent."

Sharpe and Skakkebæk reported these findings in an article in the May 29, 1993, issue of *The Lancet*, in which they also advanced the theory that various industrial chemicals were behaving like synthetic estrogens, and that these chemicals might be responsible for the falling sperm count and the rise of disorders in the male reproductive tract. "Of all the hormones we know, the estrogens are the most potent," Sharpe told me. "You can get biological effects from estrogen at levels so low you cannot measure them by any analytical method."

As Sharpe and Skakkebæk were wondering about other sources of estrogen exposure, Sharpe received a call from John Sumpter, a fish biologist at Brunel University, in Uxbridge, England. Sumpter reported that a number of fish in British rivers and streams had been turning up with odd-looking genitalia. They were suffering from a condition called intersex; that is, they contained genitals of both sexes. Male fish were actually producing a female protein, vitellogenin, which is used to make egg yolks. Below sewage outfalls in Northern England, investigators had found that one out of twenty fish were hermaphrodites. Beginning in 1986, Sumpter and his colleagues at Brunel had begun placing cages of male rainbow trout in the rivers below the sewage-treatment lagoons. They found massive responses, indicating that there were some compounds emanating from sewage-treatment works

AT THE GALLERIES

LIFE WORK

Seen at short range or from way back, Chuck Close's portraits of his artist friends are a bright part of his own extraordinary story.

ENCOUNTERED in a gallery or here, on the printed page, the dimensions of this painting remain elusive. A 1994 portrait of Roy Lichtenstein by his friend and fellow-painter Chuck Close, it is either a likeness, of almost photographic precision, executed on a heroic scale, or an assemblage of eighteen hundred and seventy-two minute two-and-an-eighth-inch squares, each one an individual painting of startling boldness and sensuous color. Visitors to the current Close show at the Pace Wildenstein gallery discover that the eight-and-a-half-by-seven-foot canvas has been given the proper viewing space. Backing away to twenty, then to thirty feet, you notice that the Lichtenstein profile grows progressively sharper, brighter, and more recognizable. At the full available distance of ninety feet, you have him down for good: *bang* goes your visa stamp—this passport is valid. John Yau, writing in the show's catalogue, attaches the passport analogy to some earlier Close portraits; the playwright John Guare compares the current works to official court portraits and to the massive stone heads on Easter Island.

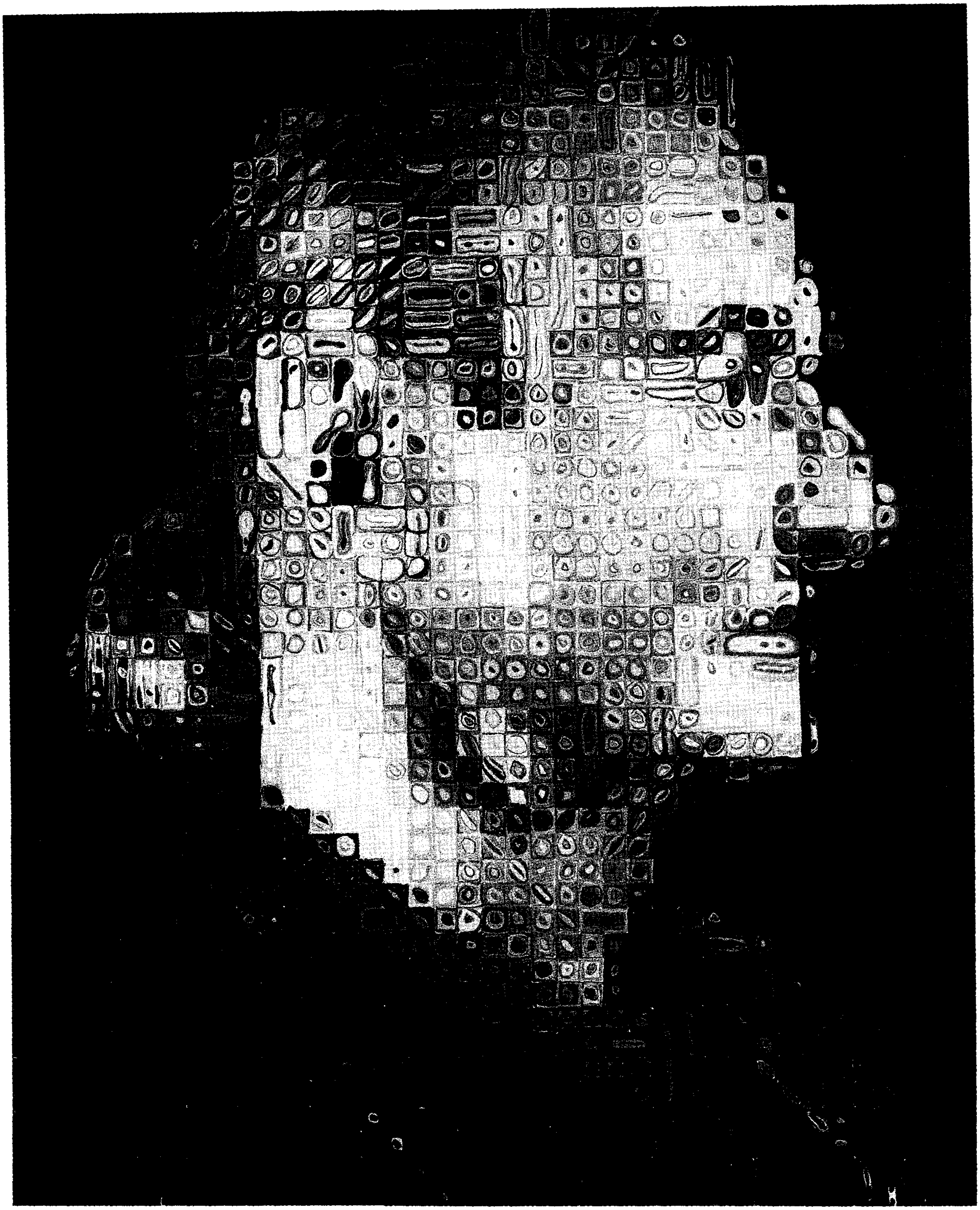
Guare, in his text for the vivid, splendidly designed "Chuck Close: Life and Work, 1988-1995" (Thames & Hudson; $35), avoids aesthetic appreciation in favor of a terse, unemotional telling of the horrific Chuck Close story, which the art world now knows so well and comprehends with such difficulty. Late in 1988, Close, already a revered figure in contemporary American art, was inexplicably stricken by a spinal blood clot that left him a near-total quadriplegic—a permanent wheelchair resident with a bit of recovered motion in his upper arms. At forty-eight, married and the father of two daughters, he was at the peak of an immense career: all now the stuff of tragedy, except to Close himself. Indeed, the power of this book arrives in one's perception of a thrilling double story, of art and life, that started with his repudiation of self-pity and, through example, his banishment of sentimentality about his plight from all who encounter him. Bald and bearded, he aims (through horn-rimmed glasses) a concentrated, lightly ironic, New York-smart gaze at his tablemates in a SoHo restaurant, for instance, and, while he converses, accepts help in fastening to his right hand the scruffy-looking assemblage of straps and Velcro in which he will insert his fork.

He paints the same way, with a laden brush clamped first between his teeth and then in the makeshift hand. Even in the earliest stages of his rehabilitation, he realized that at worst he would be able to fashion tiny paintings that might be put up on a wall. Then, in a further bit of luck (a burned cinder of luck, to be sure), it came to him that his most recent portraits had shown the beginnings of a "dissolution of the image"—a mixture of grisaille and pointillist dots—and that this lent itself to the fresh boxy or lozenged minishapes that he executed with a brighter and then an explosive palette. Even the darker-hued, more photographic paintings in the Pace show (including two self-portraits) arrived in exuberant grays and browns. A ravaged artist had become, in a miracle, one of the great colorists and brush wielders of his time.

The portraits begin with enormous, patiently planned and lighted Polaroid photographs. Close then overlays them with a grid of small squares, forming the maquette on which he can execute, with the canvas affixed this way and that before him, his brilliant boxes. Their enticing complexity—paintings that become larger from a distance and are dazzlingly rich at short range—is fashioned, inch by inch, by an artist who cannot back away and see how the work is going. When John Guare, at the end of his essay, asks how this is possible, Close can only offer a painter's answer, within which lies, for the rest of us, the mystery of art: "I know how the colors will land."

—ROGER ANGELL

PACEWILDENSTEIN

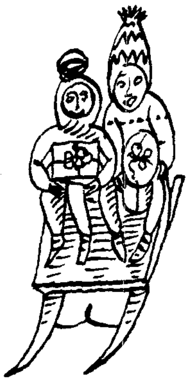


"Roy II" (1994), by Chuck Close.

which demonstrate estrogen-like effects in nature.

At first, Sumpter and his colleagues suspected ethynyl estradiol, which is the main form of estrogen found in the contraceptive pill. Ethynyl estradiol is an extremely potent estrogen: the feminizing effect on male trout is evident at doses that are too small to be measured at all. The Pill is so pervasively used in Western cultures that its residue can be found in treated sewage. But it has not been ascertained whether it is also present in drinking water, and Sumpter decided to test other compounds that are readily found in the environment and many household products.

In addition to synthesized estrogens, there are more than a hundred thousand widely used industrial chemicals in the environment, and about a thousand new ones are introduced each year. Until now, these chemicals and their by-products have been tested only for their potential to cause cancer or birth defects—not for their ability to mimic human hormones. Chemicals are classified as estrogenic solely by their effect on living organisms. Cells have receptors that await particular hormones; in boys, for instance, cells with androgen receptors will be activated during puberty and stimulated to grow beards or produce sperm. It is disturbing to realize that these estrogen-like chemicals can pass undetected through a mother's body, creating havoc in the developing fetus.



Estrogens are good for the skin, and for that reason dermatologists prescribe birth-control pills for women who may not be sexually active. Estrogens are often found in the more de-luxe shampoos, skin creams, and vaginal creams. Pregnant women rub estrogen lotions on their bellies to avoid stretch marks. Post-menopausal women who take estrogens for hormone-replacement therapy have far lower rates of Alzheimer's disease, osteoporosis, heart attacks, and arteriosclerosis than such women who don't. On the other hand, estrogen has been linked to higher rates of breast cancer, which in the United States has been rocketing upward since the nineteen-forties. One in nine American women will get the disease in her lifetime. Breast cancer in men—a phenomenon that was almost unseen until recently—is becoming increasingly common.

There may be other effects on the population, which haven't been understood. For instance, some girls who use certain estrogenized shampoos have been found to develop breasts prematurely. Also, girls throughout the world are now reaching puberty at an earlier age than ever before in history. Could this be connected to environmental estrogens? And if estrogens are increasingly used as growth promoters in the food we eat what will happen to us as a result? "You ask yourself why people are bigger and taller now," Sharpe told me. "And people say that's due to better nutrition. It probably is. You just wonder at the same time if there might be other factors at work."

If estrogen can cause physiological changes, it might be able to bring about behavioral changes as well. Patricia L. Whitten, a biological anthropologist at Emory University, has begun to explore the provocative idea that changes in sexual behavior, such as the declining age of first intercourse, may be tied to changes in the diet as well as biological differences in the human body which are caused by the increased burden of organic chemicals in the environment. We are only beginning to understand how human beings and other animals adjust to the panoply of chemicals that we continually introduce into the environment, and thus into ourselves.

There are isolated examples of other animals in nature that are experiencing reproductive problems quite similar to man's, including decreased fertility and sex reversals. As a result of the dumping of DDT into the Los Angeles sewer system over more than two decades, female Western Gulls—they have come to be called "lesbian gulls"—took to nesting together, because the males had apparently lost interest. In the early nineteen-eighties, the alligator population of Lake Apopka, Florida, crashed after a chemical-mixing plant spilled into the lake a large amount of a pesticide called dicofol, which contains DDT. Researchers have found estrogen levels in female hatchling alligators that are nearly twice what they should have been, and juveniles' ovaries appear burned out—as if menopausal. The males register practically no testosterone. Penis sizes are smaller—three-quarters to two-thirds of what they used to be. Also in Florida, only about thirty-five panthers survive, and of those many of the males have undescended testicles. Until recently, this situation was attributed to inbreeding, but when scientists looked at the panthers' hormone levels they found that the males had twice as much estrogen as they had testosterone. The quality of the sperm was wretched: seventy-five per cent were deformed—almost as bad as the situation Skakkebæk found in the average Danish man.

Of course, natural estrogens have always been present in many plants, among them alfalfa, cabbage, spinach, and rye. One thinks of these phytoestrogens as harmless, even beneficial, but some of them have demonstrably powerful effects on animals. Some species of clover can lower sperm counts in rams and cause aberrant sexual behavior in ewes. Alfalfa can cause nymphomania in cattle, and sorghum can induce abortions. Certain phytoestrogens are particularly abundant in soya, which is an ingredient of many baby foods and is increasingly being used as a meat substitute. But it is not yet known whether the levels of phytoestrogens in soy products would be sufficient to have developmental effects on humans.

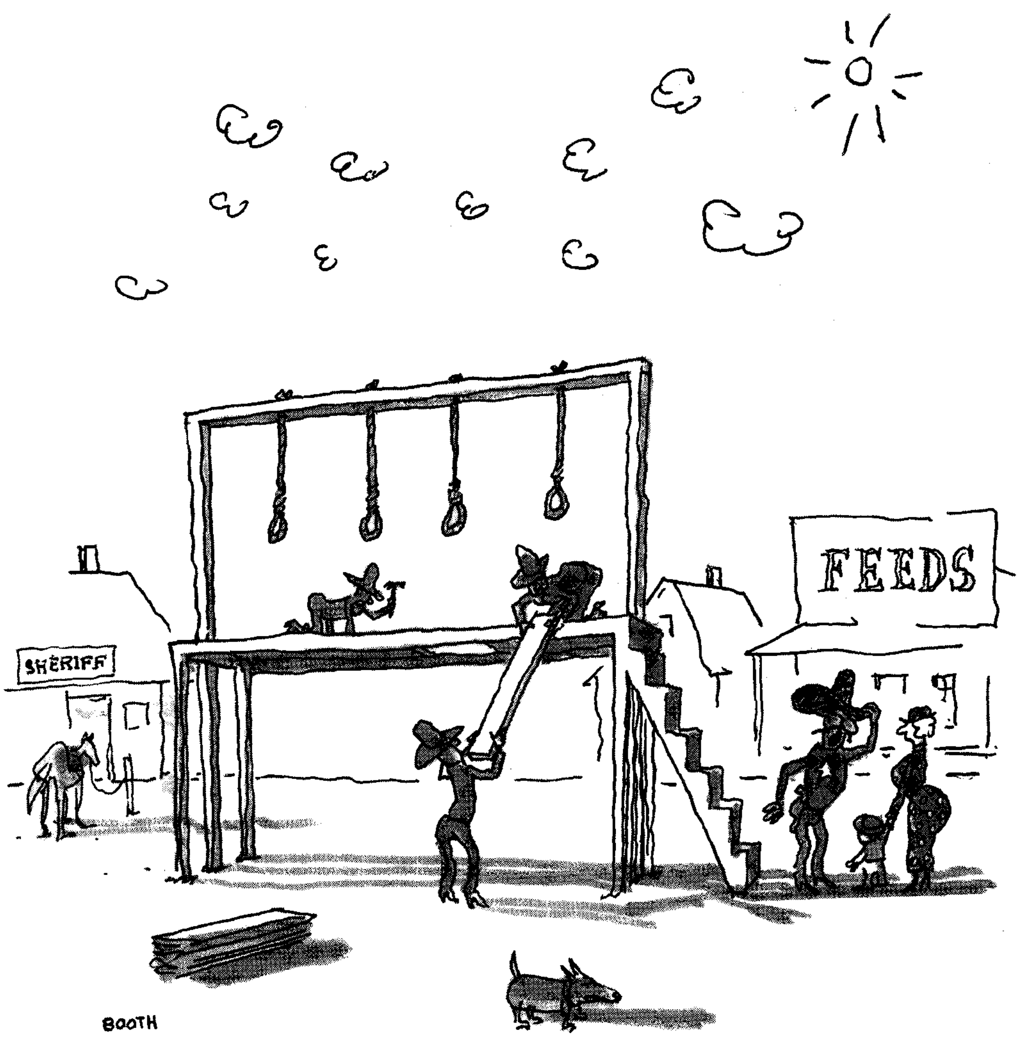
Although the impact of this highly estrogenized environment on humans is uncertain, it is well known that men who work directly with estrogen tend to become feminized. In 1989, there was a curious article in *Acta Cytologica* about a male mortician who visited a clinic in Philadelphia complaining of a mass in his breast. A mammogram and tissue examination revealed that he was indeed developing a bosom. For the past four or five years, he had been applying an embalming cream to the faces of the corpses that he prepared. Embalming cream is rich in estrogens, and when the mortician took to wearing rubber gloves his problem abated. Men who have worked in plants that manufactured DES or birth-control pills have also experienced enlarged breasts. A recent study in London of a thousand men who suffered from "male menopause"—a syndrome with symptoms that include a drop in libido and potency, accompanied by fatigue and depression—found a subgroup of men who had worked on farms where chickens and turkeys were raised. It was a common practice for domestic fowl to be implanted with estrogen pellets. These caponized birds are plump and tender, with the great swollen breasts that are so highly favored by chefs and consumers. Unfortunately, the farmers became partly caponized themselves. Caponizing birds by this method was outlawed after it was discovered that men who frequently ate estrogenized fowl—particularly waiters in chicken restaurants—exhibited low fertility and developed breasts.

In 1993, Sharpe and Sumpter decided to test various common chemicals to determine whether they had an estrogen effect—Sharpe with his pregnant rats and Sumpter with his male trout. Among the compounds that they tested were octylphenol and butyl benzyl phthalate—both exceedingly common. Octylphenol belongs to a class of sturdy compounds called alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs), which have been found in river water at rather high levels. They are often used as emulsifiers and are found in detergents, paints, herbicides and pesticides, plastic wraps, textiles, spermicides and condom lubricants, cosmetics and hair colorings. APEs are very resistant to breaking down, and for that reason they have been banned in home detergents in the United Kingdom (though not in the United States). Phthalates, which make plastic flexible, are the most abundant man-made chemicals in the environment, and they are present in the human diet. When Sharpe and Sumpter tested these chemicals in animals at levels approximating average human exposure, they found effects similar to those of DES: male trout produced female proteins, and the male rat pups matured with smaller-than-average testes and lower sperm production.

The environmental-estrogen hypothesis opened up fascinating but disturbing possibilities. "The evidence we have from people like Niels Skakkebæk and his colleagues is very suggestive," Philippe Grandjean, a professor of environmental medicine at Odense University, in Denmark, told me. "We thought in the past that these toxic substances would act on a target—an enzyme or DNA or the cell membrane, or something like that. But what these endocrinologists have suggested to us is that industrial chemicals can actually mimic hormones. It looks as if the receptors aren't very good at recognizing what is a hormone and what's not a hormone—perhaps because they were never previously challenged. These receptors have been kept almost unchanged in the mammalian world, because they worked. They functioned very well. But in this century we have generated all these new chemicals and injected them into the environment, and suddenly the body is exposed to new substances that in some cases can interact with that receptor. The human species is totally unprepared for this, because it has never happened before. I think the perspective is both very exciting and very, very frightening."

For some scientists, however, there are too many things about the estrogen hypothesis that don't add up. "The estrogen link is total bunk," Stephen Safe, a professor of toxicology at Texas A. & M., told me. According to Safe's calculations, the amount of estrogenic industrial compounds that we consume is an inconsequential fraction of the natural estrogenic flavinoids we get from fruits and vegetables in our diet, and the hormonal effects of most of these industrial chemicals are puny in comparison with those produced by the body's far more robust forms of estrogen. In some Eastern countries, like Japan, the amount of estrogen in the diet is many times as high as it is in the West, mainly because of the high consumption of soy-based products, but there is no corresponding rise in breast cancer. On the other hand, the men in Asian countries, and particularly in Japan and Hong Kong, have comparatively small testicles and commensurately low sperm counts.

Safe admitted that he didn't have a clue to what could be causing lower sperm counts and other male reproductive problems. "Lord only knows," he said. "It may be a very regional thing. But just because



"There was 'reasonable doubt,' Ma'am, so we're hanging a few lawyers."

• •

Denmark has a problem and a few alligators in a swamp below a Superfund site develop small penises doesn't mean our sperm counts are going down or our reproductive success has declined. I just don't think we should extrapolate."

In 1993, as the debate about environmental estrogens was raging in the scientific journals, a very tall man appeared in the office of an orthopedic surgeon in Cincinnati, complaining of knock-knee. The man, who was twenty-eight, told the surgeon that he had been of average stature until the end of puberty, when his peers naturally settled into their mature adult height, but he had kept growing—far beyond the size of his parents. When he talked to the surgeon, he was six feet eight and wore a size-18 shoe. The surgeon took an X-ray, and it showed that the tips of the man's long bones, which are supposed to fuse together and signal the end of growth, were still separated. The tall man was otherwise perfectly ordinary-looking, but he had the skeleton of an enormous teen-ager. He was also, apparently, unique in medical history. No one else had ever simply not stopped growing.

It is generally believed that growth in males is arrested by male hormones called androgens, which are produced in both males and females. This assumption is based on the fact that the bones fuse at a time when testosterone, a male's most abundant androgen, is at a high level. One might conclude, then, that there was some deficiency in the male hormone that caused this young man to be trapped on an adolescent escalator. But men who lack an adequate amount of androgens or are insensitive to them also share a highly distinctive feature: they look like women, even to the point of having breasts and a vagina. Usually, they don't learn that they're men until the onset of puberty, when they fail to menstruate. This man looked like a man.

The tall man was eventually sent to see Eric P. Smith, an associate professor of pediatrics in the division of endocrinology at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. Smith noticed that the man had high levels of estrogen in his blood. "That was quite curious," Smith told me. "It was unusual to see in a man who appeared so normal. With estrogen at that level, one would expect to see breast enlargement." Instead, the patient had ordinary beard growth, a deep voice, morning erections, and normal heterosexual arousal to women.

Another possible explanation of the man's condition was that he lacked the ability to receive estrogen in his cells. But if that was the case, the tall man should never have been born, because without estrogen an embryo supposedly cannot implant itself in the uterine wall. But Smith had just learned of a strain of mice that had been created, in a National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences lab, with defective estrogen receptors. "That flew in the face of the dogma that such an animal would not survive," Smith said. He decided to test this hypothesis by administering to his overgrown patient massive doses of estrogen through skin patches, similar to the therapy given to men with prostate cancer or to transsexuals undergoing a sex change. After six months, however, the tall man showed none of the usual effects of estrogen therapy—weight gain, breast growth, headaches, mood alterations—nor had his bones fused. Smith concluded that his patient was resistant to estrogen and hypothesized that his estrogen receptors were defective. This finding was later confirmed by DNA analysis.

"Plutardo, babe."

Until the estrogen-receptor mutant stepped into the discussions, the accepted wisdom had been that estrogen had only a very small role to play in male biological processes: it was considered to be a kind of androgynous artifact, like nipples on men. The tall man had demonstrated that our understanding of the role of hormones in human development was shockingly primitive and, in many cases, simply wrong. The typical male brain, for example, has estrogen receptors in certain regions, and it was thought that one of the few functions that this hormone might have in males was to "masculinize" the brain. But the tall man's brain was apparently already fully masculinized, and this left the function of those receptors still unknown.

More to the point, the tall man's sperm count was found to be low—twenty-five million per millilitre—and only eighteen per cent of his sperm was alive. "I must say I was surprised," Smith told me. "Intuitively, you would think that spermatogenesis would not be affected if your estrogen receptor was not functional—that, if anything, you might have more robust spermatogenesis."

Of course, it is dangerous to generalize widely on the basis of the case of a man who is in so many ways unique. But it turned out that the mice who were without estrogen receptors also

GREAT DOG POEM NO. 2

Now that the great dog I worshipped for years
Has become none other than myself, I can look within

And bark, and I can look at the mountains down the street
And bark at them as well. I am an eye that sees itself

Look back, a nose that tracks the scent of shadows
As they fall, an ear that picks up sounds

Before they are born. I am the last of the platinum
Retrievers, the end of a gorgeous line.

But there's no comfort being who I am. I roam around
And ponder fate's abolishments until my eyes

Are filled with tears and I say to myself, "Oh, Rex,
Forget. Forget. The stars are out. The marble moon slides by."

—MARK STRAND

had very low sperm counts. The case of the tall man, whose sperm-producing cells seemed unaffected by the presence of estrogen in his body, illustrates that something other than estrogen can be responsible for low sperm counts. In this scenario, other chemicals in the environment may affect the hormonal balance by blocking either the estrogen receptors or the androgen receptors, or both. It is possible that those chemicals are even more potent in their effect than environmental estrogens. Dioxin, which is a by-product of chemical manufacturing and of the pulp-and-paper industry, is present at low levels nearly everywhere in the environment, and it can cause an astonishing amount of damage. "Our studies [in rats] show that a single dose of dioxin administered during pregnancy permanently reduces sperm counts in the males by about sixty per cent," Earl Gray, who is a research biologist at the Environmental Protection Agency, told a House of Representatives subcommittee in 1993. Gray's lab has also been examining a widely used pesticide called vinclozolin. It is an anti-androgen, which is to say that it blocks the receptors of the male hormone. Vinclozolin administered to a pregnant rat emasculates the male pups to the point that they are indistinguishable from the females. But it has little effect on the females. It is clear that there are a number of other chemicals that have the ability to imitate or block human hormones, and scientists like Gray are only beginning to take an inventory of such compounds. "With sperm counts, I've been more impressed by the dioxins and PCBs than by the estrogens and anti-androgens," Gray said. "We get surprising effects at relatively low doses."

Even Richard Sharpe, whose research did so much to advance the environmental-estrogen hypothesis, admits that it remains unproved. "The remarkable thing about the whole DES episode in human beings is that, for something that was conducted on such a large scale, using colossal amounts of such a potent hormone, the effects on both the male and the female offspring were of such low incidence," Sharpe says. For Sharpe and many other scientists, the hunt for the cause of declining sperm counts is far from over. Lately, he has actually begun to wonder if humanity has undergone an evolutionary mutation that may have seriously jeopardized its ability to produce sperm.

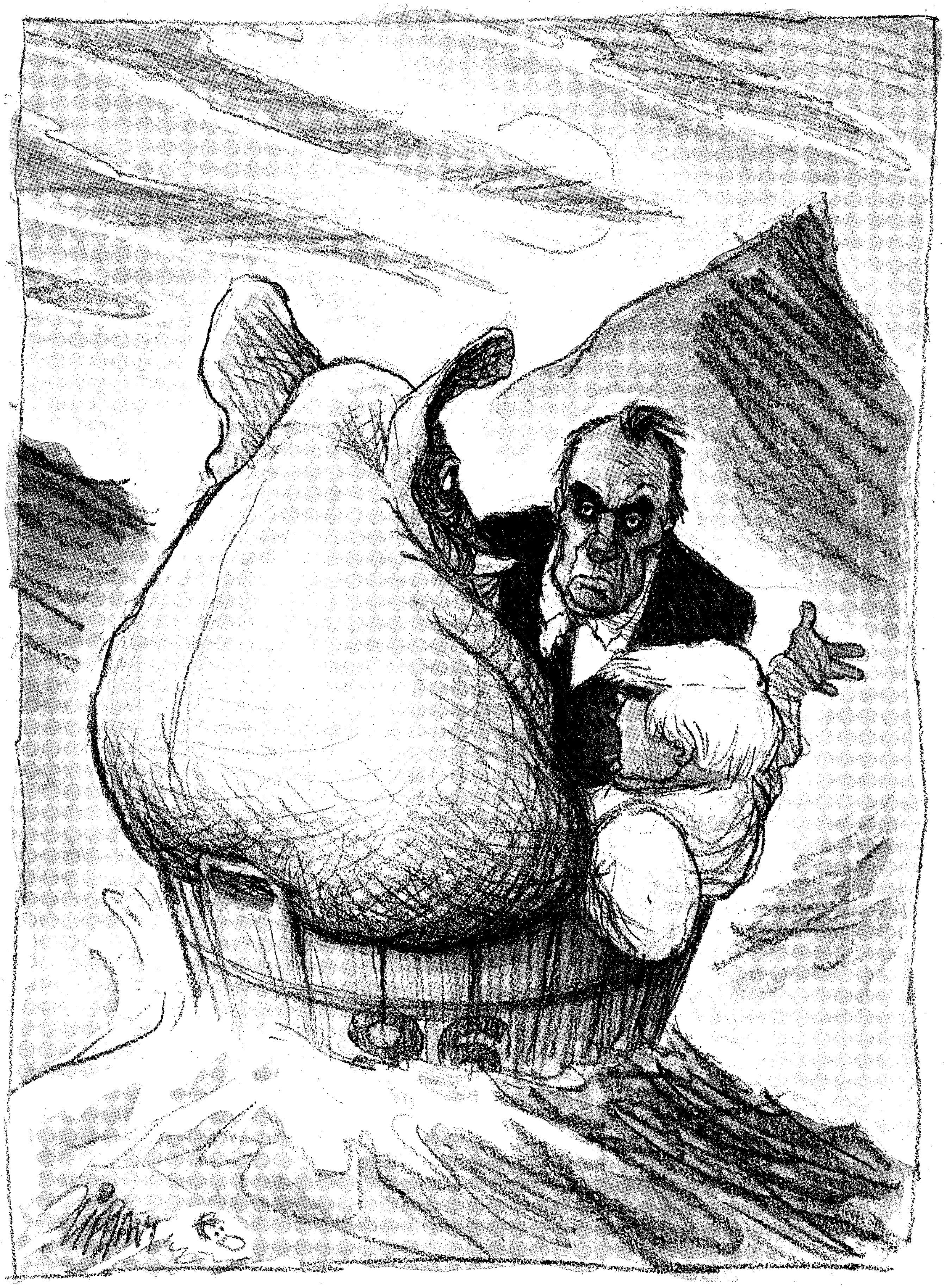
WHATEVER combination of factors is causing the sperm counts to fall, the answer seems to lie in the differences between the Danes and the Finns. A 1993 survey of six studies of Finnish men found that their average sperm count was a hundred and fourteen million per millilitre—nearly double the worldwide average and two and a half times that of Denmark. (Sweden and Norway have sperm counts slightly above Denmark's.) As Skakkebæk would have predicted, on the basis of the high Finnish sperm counts, the rate of testicular cancer in Finland is a fourth that of Denmark, and the prevalence of malformed penises is approximately a third. Yet these countries are near neighbors, with much in common in their diets, their cultures, and their environments. How could the men in these countries vary so widely in their sperm counts?

Several prominent scientists are investigating what is informally called the Mystery of the Finnish Testicles. Some of the explanations seem counterintuitive, if not comical. For instance, there is the well-known Finnish fondness for saunas. A hot sauna should temporarily flatten a man's sperm count. Spermatogenesis is extremely sensitive to heat—that's why a man's gonads are outside his body, and why the scrotum expands and contracts. Sperm like to be about two degrees cooler than the temperature of the body. But few scientists accept the notion that saunas somehow acclimate the testicles to higher temperatures than those which are thought to be caused by central heating and the modern sedentary life style.

Jyrki Suominen, who is an andrologist at the University of Turku, in Finland, and his colleague Matti Vierula, who is a lecturer at the university's Institute of Biomedicine, have a theory that could provide a novel solution to the Finnish-testicle mystery. "Studies show that man is a seasonal breeder," Vierula told me in Suominen's office, and he pointed to a graph that correlated the variations in the average Finnish sperm count with the months of the year. "Sperm counts are highest in the winter." Perhaps the summer heat depletes the sperm and Finland is less likely to suffer such losses because it has a cooler climate. Some researchers have theorized more broadly that global warming has thrown a blanket over sperm production. A study in New Orleans, however, compared sperm concentrations of men who worked in air-conditioned buildings with those of men who worked outdoors, and, surprisingly, both groups showed a twenty-per-cent decline in their sperm count during the summer months. This suggested that temperature was not a factor, though some other seasonal dif-

SKETCHBOOK • BY PAT OLIPHANT

RUB-A-DUB-DUB



ference might be at work. Suominen and Vierula think that what distinguishes low summer sperm counts from high winter counts is the relative absence of light. If this is true, then one might speculate that the Finns have an advantage over the Danes in the form of longer nights. Vierula hypothesizes that people today live in a perpetual artificial summer. "When we use artificial light, we lengthen our days," he explains. "Some studies suggest that women's menstrual cycles react to the amount of light, and I think our testicles react as well."

Another plausible explanation is that significant genetic differences may predispose Finnish men toward larger testicles and therefore higher sperm counts. Most Finns come from different ethnic stock than the Danes do—they are related to the Hungarians—but there has been little scientific research into the comparative testes sizes of ethnic groups. Testes are measured with an orchidometer, which is a sort of necklace of beads of various sizes a doctor wears around his neck. With one hand, he gauges the size of a man's testicle, and with the other he tries to determine the bead of equivalent size, among beads ranging in size from a pea to a plum. Until a definitive study is done on the basis of this procedure, however, one can't say that the Finns are mostly plums and the Danes are mostly peas. One Finnish scientist, Risto Santti, a reproductive biologist at the University of Turku, downplays any notion of Finnish supremacy. "We're ordinary guys," he said. "We like to love. We like to work. There's nothing special with Finnish men."

Other theories examine life-style differences. Smoking is far more common among Danes than among Finns, and this could be a factor, since nicotine can damage a fetus in many ways. In addition, Finland is less densely populated than Denmark, so the level of stress may be correspondingly lower. Both populations eat lots of ham and dairy products, and also fish from the polluted Baltic Sea. Stephen Safe has studied the organochlorine levels in the blood of Danes, Finns, and other Scandinavians. "There's no difference," Safe told me. "It's probably something else."

But Santti is troubled by the increasing pollution of Finnish waters, which in some lakes and rivers is even worse than in Denmark. "In Finland, the otters are gone from some areas, the gulls are becoming less common, our seals are not normal," Santti said. "The paper-and-pulp industry has polluted our waters. The fish living downstream from pulp mills have reproductive problems." Logically, of course, this should mean that Finnish sperm counts will fall below those of the Danes, and not the opposite. "My educated guess is that the differences we see now reflect the life style and the environment of our countries thirty or more years ago," I was told by Jorma Toppari, who is a pediatrician with an interest in male reproductive problems. At that time, Denmark was already an industrial country, while Finland was comparatively more rural and less populated. Now the countries are far more alike. Toppari, who practices at the Turku University Central Hospital, points out that there are currently differences in the average sperm count even within Finland: the cities have far lower counts than the countryside. Men in Kuopio, which is in the lake district of southern central Finland, have an average sperm density of a hundred and thirty-three million nine hundred thousand per millilitre—the highest concentration recorded in the world in the last half century. Meanwhile, the count in Turku, Finland's second-largest city, averaged ninety million. These differences suggest to Toppari that as the Finns modernize they will have less to brag about. "I'm afraid Finland will follow the other countries later," he says with resignation.

By a remarkable coincidence, Skakkebæk's 1992 report in the *British Medical Journal* coincided with the publication of an extraordinary science-fiction novel by the popular British author P. D. James, who is otherwise known for her detective novels. The premise of James's book, which is entitled "The Children of Men" and is set in the year 2021, is that males have lost the ability to produce fertile sperm. The novel's narrator writes, twenty-five years after the last human baby has been born:

> We should have been warned in the early 1990s. As early as 1991, a European Community Report showed a slump in the number of children born in Europe—8.2 million in 1990, with particular drops in the Roman Catholic countries. We thought that we knew the reasons, that the fall was deliberate, a result of more liberal attitudes to birth control and abortion, the postponement of pregnancy by professional women pursuing their careers, the wish of families for a higher standard of living. . . . Some European countries began to pursue a vigorous campaign to encourage the birth of children, but most of us thought the fall was desirable, even necessary. . . . As I remember it, no one suggested that the fertility of the human race was dramatically changing. When Omega came, it came with dramatic suddenness and was received with incredulity. Overnight, it seemed, the human race had lost its power to breed.

Although we are not at a point where our survival as a species is threatened, the fecundity of our children and grandchildren is certainly in question. Myriad chemicals in the environment may affect our hormonal balance, in ways that are still poorly understood. Stress and life-style choices also jeopardize the production of healthy and abundant sperm. The result, of course, is an increase in infertility, the gravity of which can only accelerate if sperm counts fall in succeeding generations.

Clearly, more research is needed to determine the scope of the problem. The most important unanswered question among the many theories that purport to explain the falling sperm count is whether the decline is permanent and irreparable. The hope, of course, is that some modern condition or habit has somehow waylaid the production of sperm, and that the cause needs only to be discovered and removed for the count to rebound. Unfortunately, the truth about the sperm count is that it is under attack from many different sources. "We are outraged and demoralized less by the impending end of our species, less even by our inability to prevent it, than by our failure to discover the cause," the narrator of "The Children of Men" complains. "Western science and Western medicine haven't prepared us for the magnitude and humiliation of this ultimate failure." So far, at least, this prophecy has been dismayingly accurate. It is as if manhood itself were waging a losing campaign against forces as yet unknown but frighteningly overwhelming. ♦

THE ART WORLD

DADA AND MAMA

What made Marcel Duchamp, the most influential and elusive artist of the twentieth-century avant-garde, happy? Married life with Teeny.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

The widows of great artists have their work cut out for them. Dealers, museum curators, and art historians court them mercilessly, begging favors, promising riches, immortality, and ten-pound catalogues raisonnés. For some, the pressures can be overwhelming. Jacqueline Picasso committed suicide. Annette Giacometti succumbed to the temptation (not uncommon among sculptors' heirs) of authorizing posthumous casts. Very few artists' widows have handled their responsibilities as graciously and intelligently as Mme. Marcel Duchamp, who died last month, just short of her ninetieth birthday, at her old farmhouse near Paris, in the village of Villiers-sous-Grez.

Far from being overwhelmed by Duchamp's soaring reputation—since his death, in 1968, he has come to be thought of as the most influential artist of the twentieth century—Teeny Duchamp (nearly everybody called her that; her given name was Alexina) presided over its trajectory with pleasure and verve, correcting errors and misunderstandings where she could, keeping the emphasis on art and ideas rather than on the market, and becoming, in her quiet way, a personage: a rather grand old lady, whose style was unaffected, simple, and direct. Jasper Johns, the avant-garde composer John Cage, and many other artists loved to visit her in Villiers, not because she was one of the last survivors of a great epoch but because she was so much fun to be around and because Duchamp's presence (even though he had never been there) was so vividly felt. Visiting Johns one time at his island home, in St. Martin, Teeny fell in love with two puppies born to a stray dog on the beach. They reminded her of dogs in Gauguin's paintings, and she adopted them—took them back to France with her on the plane, in a champagne carton lined with an old Johns sweater. One of them later mated with a King Charles spaniel, and produced a red-haired puppy named Whiskey, which Teeny gave to Johns. He recalls, "Years later, Teeny, looking at Whiskey, said, 'Gosh! Too much of that cockled Spaniard.' "

The marriage to Duchamp had come relatively late in the lives of both of them. Teeny had been married for twenty years to the New York art dealer Pierre Matisse, whose father was Henri Matisse. Duchamp had also been married once before, but very briefly, to a French automobile heiress; thereafter, numerous love affairs and one long-term liaison had put no dent in his seemingly implacable dedication to bachelorhood. When he and Teeny surprised everyone by getting married, in 1954, Teeny's three grown children were delighted. Peter Matisse, the youngest, who had been hit hard by his parents' divorce, found in Duchamp a calm and humorous ally. "Marcel takes an optimistic view of life," Teeny said. "Then if things go badly he handles them, but he doesn't worry. My children all adore him." Her daughter, Jacqueline, the eldest, has always felt that she owes her career as an artist in large part to Duchamp's tactful encouragement. Paul, the secondborn, who also became an artist, once described the marriage as "harmonic"—always in tune. "With Marcel," Paul once told me, "there was never this concern with the person in the mirror. He just lived directly." Teeny made Duchamp's life a great deal more agreeable, and her friends noticed a big change in her; being with Duchamp seemed to bring out the warmth and spontaneity that had been somewhat suppressed during her previous marriage. The couple also shared a huge secret. Duchamp, who was commonly believed to have abandoned serious art-making in 1923, spent the last two decades of his life working on a large-scale sculptural installation entitled "Étant Donnés: 1. La Chute d'Eau; 2. Le Gaz d'Éclairage" ("Given: 1. The Waterfall; 2. The Gas for Lighting"). It now occupies its own room in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where most of Duchamp's major paintings are also on permanent display. Duchamp once said that the only way for an artist to escape from the contemporary pressures of publicity and commercialization was to "go underground." He was talking about himself, of course, as the world later discovered. To realize his astonishing last work, he needed the solitude that Teeny helped to provide.

Duchamp, a notary's son from a small village in Normandy, became an American citizen the year after he married Teeny. "Marcel just liked America," according to Teeny. "He felt much freer here than in France." Teeny was one of those Americans who are at home anywhere in the world. She grew up in Cincinnati, the youngest of six daughters of a successful eye surgeon named Robert Sattler. (Her nickname came from her low birthweight, and it stuck immediately.) The Sattler household was a cultivated one. All the children learned to speak French and German at an early age, and they were often taken to Europe in the summer. Teeny's mother, who was Sattler's second wife, was an accomplished violinist and a gifted hostess, and the house in Cincinnati became a gathering spot for visiting musicians, artists, and European friends.

In 1921, one of Teeny's older sisters persuaded her parents to let her go to school in Paris, and a year later Teeny was allowed to join her. She was only sixteen at the time, but a friend of her mother's, Mariette Mills, had volunteered to look after her. Mariette Mills was married to an American businessman named Heyworth Mills, who was

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Teeny and Marcel Duchamp photographed by Man Ray in his Paris apartment in 1955, the year after their wedding.

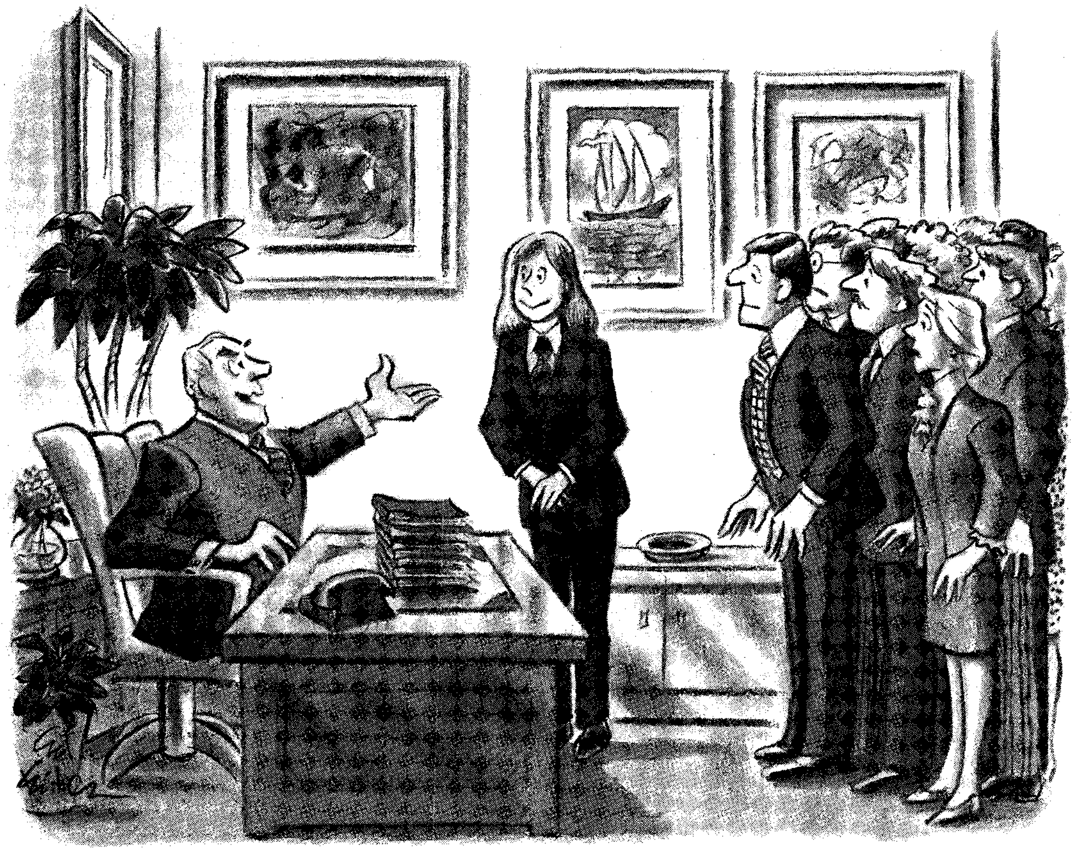
based in Paris. They had a big apartment on the Rue Boissonnade, in Montparnasse, and a country house near Rambouillet, and, like the Cincinnati Sattlers, they cultivated the company of artists, writers, and musicians. Mariette herself was a sculptor. She had studied with Antoine Bourdelle, and she was a great friend of Constantin Brancusi, who occasionally came to stay with them at their country place. "As the youngest child in the house, I would usually bring him his breakfast in the tower room," Teeny told me several years ago. "We were all enchanted with Brancusi. After dinner, it was the custom to take a walk in the forest. Brancusi would climb a pine tree, and, while we children sat on the ground below, tell us Romanian folktales. Later on, I remember showing him some of my art-school drawings—he made useful criticisms."

The first winter Teeny was in Paris, the Millses gave a ball in their Rue Boissonnade apartment. Teeny was on the dance floor when, as she told me, she felt "a sudden rise in the level of excitement," and heard someone say that Marcel Duchamp had just come in. Although Duchamp was not nearly as well known then in Paris as he was in New York, where his Cubist "Nude Descending a Staircase" had been the succès de scandale of the 1913 Armory Show, he was already someone who was talked about, and Teeny, when she was introduced to him, found him charming. He had come in with the American expatriate writer Robert McAlmon, who caused a minor nineteen-twenties sensation by peeing over the railing of the Millses' circular staircase.

Teeny went on to study sculpture at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. She was not without talent, but her marriage to Pierre Matisse, in 1929, put an end to any ambitions along those lines. Pierre, who had suffered quite enough from being the son of a world-famous painter, did not want another artist in his family. What he had in mind was someone who would run a smooth household, entertain wealthy collectors, and offer a soothing respite from artistic egos. Teeny did all those things efficiently for the next twenty years, in addition to bringing up their three children; she also ran Pierre's New York gallery for several months in 1939, when Pierre, who had neglected to register the births of his children in France, was called up for service as a childless French citizen in the early days of the Second World War.

The abrupt breakup of their marriage, in 1949, came as a great shock to her. Pierre had fallen in love with the American wife of Roberto Matta Echaurren, one of the Surrealist painters he showed. Several other men were in love with Patricia Matta at the time, including the art dealer Leo Castelli: an intensely neurotic and seductive young woman, she was more striking than beautiful, with a fearless manner and a keen eye for pictures, and none of her other admirers could imagine what she saw in the dour, stolid, uptight Pierre Matisse. He was in such a hurry to get a divorce and marry her, at any rate, that he gave Teeny their country house, in Lebanon, New Jersey, and also a large stock of important paintings as a settlement. For the next few years, Teeny supported herself as a private dealer, selling from her stock of works by Brancusi, Joan Miró, and other artists she had known for a long time.

As for Duchamp, he had meanwhile made the decision to live permanently in New York. A frequent visitor before the war, he had come over in 1942, in the general exodus of European artists and intellectuals after the fall of France, and instead of going back when the war ended he stayed on and applied for American citizenship. He lived in a thirty-five-dollar-a-month studio apartment on West Fourteenth Street, and worked on his secret sculpture installation in a small back room across the hall. In the spring of 1951, the painter Max Ernst and his artist wife, Dorothea Tanning, invited him to come with them for a weekend at Teeny Matisse's house in New Jersey, about an hour and a half due west of Man-



"Pam here is the winner of our 'How small a salary can I live on?' essay contest. The rest of you are fired."

HELLO
BEN
HELLO
ALEX
HELLO
NAT
KOREN

"Ben is my given name, and E-Z Stomper is my street name."

hattan. Although Duchamp had seen Teeny a number of times since their introduction at the Millses' ball nearly thirty years earlier, they barely knew each other. Pierre Matisse had disliked Duchamp, whose apparent lack of commitment to anything seemed to him highly irresponsible. During the weekend at Teeny's country house, Dorothea Tanning became aware of "some breathless element floating around, which was the vibration of two people getting together"—just what she'd had in mind when she invited Duchamp to come along. It happened naturally and serenely, according to Tanning: Marcel and Teeny came together at just the right moment in their lives. Teeny had been deeply hurt by her divorce, two years earlier, but she was over that. She was forty-five and was very attractive (blond, athletic, with a personal style in clothes which had nothing to do with fashion), and, in addition, she was fluent in French, financially independent, an art-world insider, and a fine cook. Duchamp, at sixty-three, seemed to have aged hardly at all; his gaunt, intelligent, quintessentially French features and gently ironic manner were as seductive as ever. Moreover, he had recently been through the painful breakup of a love affair with the wife of a prominent Brazilian diplomat, and was growing tired of the bachelor life. When Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning went back to France that fall, Marcel and Teeny moved into their New York apartment, a fourth-floor walkup on East Fifty-eighth Street. The nameplate above the buzzer downstairs read "Matisse, Duchamp, Ernst."

It was Duchamp who insisted that they get married. A strain of bourgeois morality persisted in the notary's son, and he felt they owed it to Teeny's children to legitimate their relationship. Teeny was often surprised by Duchamp's thoughtfulness and dependability. For one thing, he left the apartment every morning between ten and eleven, took the bus to his Fourteenth Street studio, and returned punctually at five. "He would always appear at the time he'd said he would," she marvelled. She was also struck by "how little space he took up." When they went to spend a weekend with Teeny's friend Gardie Helm, in East Hampton, Marcel never brought a suitcase. He would wear two shirts, one on top of the other, and carry a toothbrush in his jacket pocket. Teeny shopped for his shirts in Bloomingdale's basement and eventually got him to wear some fairly rakish ones, with pink and white stripes.

By the time they got married, in 1954, Duchamp had been working for eight years on "Étant Donnés." "He worked on it all the time, but never like a workman," Teeny said. "He would work for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then he'd smoke a cigar, or study chess problems, or do something else." Although Duchamp had not stopped being an artist, he had long ago ceased to act like one. In his early career, after rapidly mastering and then discarding the prewar era's principal aesthetic influences—from Impressionism and Post-Impressionism to Fauvism and Cubism—he had withdrawn from the Paris art world to follow a direction of his own, a direction that led to the strange, erotic, allegorical painting on glass called "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" (more commonly referred to as the "Large Glass"). He worked on it from 1915 to 1923: it was his last painting. Duchamp had turned against what he called "retinal" art—art whose appeal was to the eye alone. He wanted to "put painting once again at the service of the mind," he said, and in his case this meant questioning every previous assumption about the boundaries of visual art. Duchamp quietly undermined twenty centuries of Western art with his "readymades": common manufactured objects—a snow shovel, an iron bottle-drying rack, a bicycle wheel mounted on a kitchen stool—which he promoted to the status of art simply by choosing to sign them. During the years he worked on the "Large Glass," he produced more than a dozen readymades and experimented with a variety of materials and techniques—cinema, optics, chance procedures, language—but his rigorous intellect did

"Can you just give me a synopsis of your rage so we can move on from there?"

• •

not allow him to repeat earlier discoveries, and at a certain point, as he often conceded, he ran out of ideas. The long—twenty-year—conceptual drought was what made him unwilling to let anyone else in on the secret of "Étant Donnés." His last work would turn out to be the culmination and also the antithesis of the "Large Glass," and he was in no hurry to finish it.

"Étant Donnés" took the form of an elaborate, stunningly realistic sculptural installation, whose central element was a life-size plaster cast of a nude female torso (it was eventually covered with stretched pigskin) recumbent on a bed of dead branches and leaves, in a trompe-l'oeil landscape of woods, white clouds and blue sky, a small lake, and a tiny waterfall sparkling in the sun. The nude's body and legs were almost certainly modelled on those of Maria Martins, Duchamp's former mistress, but it is Teeny's left arm and hand that hold up the antique gas lamp (*le gaz d'éclairage*), which is echoed by the waterfall in the photo-collage landscape backdrop. Although we do not see the woman's head, a switch of blond hair (the same color as Teeny's) is visible at the upper left. The dead branches and leaves came from the woods near Teeny's house in New Jersey, and Teeny also helped to gather old bricks for a wall that partly conceals the nude figure; she and Marcel used to carry paper bags when they went out to dinner in New York, so they could pick up bricks from construction sites after dark. Installed in the Philadelphia Museum the year after Duchamp died, the ensemble can be viewed by only one person at a time, through two small peepholes in an old wooden door. Enigmatic, indelible, and shocking even to this era's viewers, it has been described by Jasper Johns as "the strangest work of art in any museum."

UNTIL the late fifties, Duchamp's reputation as an artist was at a fairly low ebb. His work and his ideas held little appeal for the Abstract Expressionists, whose aggressively retinal painting had become the dominant force in Western art. When the next generation of American artists began to look for ways to break out of the Ab-Ex net in the sixties, though, more and more of them rediscovered Duchamp. John Cage served as the main conduit for Duchampian ideas—many young interdisciplinary artists first learned about Duchamp's efforts to redefine the parameters of art through Cage's composition classes at the New School—but there were other factors at work as well. The first major monograph on Duchamp, by the French critic Robert Lebel, appeared in 1959. The following year saw the publication in English in book form of Duchamp's verbal and visual notes for the "Large Glass," the magnum opus of his early career, thus making available to a wider public the verbal dimension of a work that is as much verbal as it is visual. An important Duchamp retrospective exhibition—the first ever—opened at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963, and from then on the wave of interest in him steadily gathered momentum. Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns made friends with the Duchamps as early as 1960, and both did paintings in homage to them. (Johns has used Duchampian images and ideas in his work ever since, and when he wrote, in 1968, of Duchamp's pioneering explorations in "a field where language, thought and vision act upon one another," he was also describing the territory of his own ambiguous and highly intellectual art.) The conceptually based painting and sculpture that have dominated international art since the late sixties have their primary source in Duchamp's ideas (ideas, it should be said, that are all too frequently misapplied or misunderstood); and Duchamp's irony, Duchamp's doubt, and Duchamp's verbal/visual game-playing have infiltrated postmodern music, dance, theatre, and many other aspects of the culture. As the philosopher-critic Arthur Danto wrote in 1992, "The story of the avant-garde in the twentieth century, whether in America or in Europe, seems largely to be the story of Duchamp."

Luckily for Duchamp, the recognition of his influence stopped short of fame. Although he was no longer underground, he could keep the world at arm's length while he continued to work in secret on "Étant Donnés." He rarely attended gallery openings or art-world social events. Teeny kept him informed about interesting new artists and exhibitions, and helped to winnow the increasing demands on his time. They moved from Fifty-eighth Street to a modestly comfortable apartment in one of the fine old houses on West Tenth Street, where Duchamp received interviewers and Teeny cooked dinner for small groups of friends. In the summer, they rented an apartment in Cadaqués, a fishing village on the Spanish coast north of Barcelona. Salvador Dali and his appallingly eccentric wife, Gala, lived just over the next hill, in Port-Lligat. Gala took an instant dislike to Teeny (she wisely pretended not to notice), but Dali's fervid exhibitionism subsided noticeably when he was with Duchamp; the two aging artists treated each other with great respect and an almost comical formality.

In Cadaqués, Duchamp was looked upon not as a famous artist but as a friendly gentleman who liked to play chess. He played every morning at the Café Meliton, while Teeny, who loved to swim, went off in a friend's boat to one of the little coves along the rocky coast. (One of the myths about Duchamp was that he had given up art for chess. He was a very strong player who never quite made it to grand-master level, but for ten years, from 1923 to 1933, he devoted most of his time to preparing for and playing in international chess tournaments, frequently as a member of the French national team.) In his late seventies, he still took the game seriously. One morning at the Café Meliton, while he was in the middle of a match, a visiting art dealer walked in with a friend and called out, rather ostentatiously, "*Bonjour*, Marcel!" Duchamp looked up, nodded coolly, and said, "*Bonjour et au revoir*." Although Teeny became a good chess player after she married Marcel, they hardly ever played against each other, "because, you know, you'd want to beat him," Teeny explained in a 1969 interview. "I would."

Duchamp had another long-buried secret. Although he commented on the odd fact that neither he nor any of his siblings (two older brothers, three younger sisters) had ever produced a child, Duchamp confided to Teeny that he believed he did have a daughter, born in 1911 to a married woman named Jeanne Serre. He had seen the child only once, probably in 1919, on the stairs of a Paris Métro station with her mother: in that momentary encounter—shades of Balzac!—the mother had managed to convey to him, without actually saying anything, that this was his daughter, and that nothing was expected of him regarding her. And for more than half a century he had done nothing. One evening in 1966, Duchamp and Teeny went to the Galerie Louis Carré in Paris for the *vernissage* of an exhibition of sculpture by Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Duchamp's brother, who had died many years before. Louis Carré had told Duchamp that the former Jeanne Serre (now Mme. Henry Mayer) might be there—he said she always came to exhibitions by Duchamp-Villon or Jacques Villon, the other Duchamp brother—and, indeed, she was there. After shaking hands with Jeanne Mayer, whom Teeny later described as "a lovely person, so dignified," Marcel asked about her daughter, and learned that she had become an artist who worked under the name Yo Sermayer (christened Yvonne Serre, she had combined the names of two stepfathers). What happened next was entirely Teeny's doing. She arranged to go and call on Yo, with Marcel. A phenomenal and exquisite discretion was established at this first meeting. They all knew what had brought them together, but the fact that Yo was Duchamp's daughter (if it was a fact) did not come up, either then or later. Marcel and Teeny saw Yo and her husband a number of times over the

"*Is this one of those films you can take the whole damn family to?*"

next two years; her husband, Jacques Savy, was an engineer who also happened to be a first-class chess player. Marcel gave them one of his "Valises"—the attaché-case-size boxes containing meticulously rendered reproductions of all his major works and a good many minor ones as well. (Duchamp had started making these in the thirties, in an edition that eventually numbered three hundred copies.) In 1967, he arranged for Yo to come to New York for a show of her paintings at the Bodley Gallery.

AFTER Duchamp's death, in 1968, Teeny did not have to work at promoting his reputation. At least four major museum exhibitions took care of that (the Philadelphia Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in 1973, the Centre Pompidou in 1977, and the Palazzo Grassi, in Venice, in 1993), and dozens of other museums and galleries found occasion, usually with help from Teeny, to mount Duchamp shows of one kind or another. Meanwhile, a new generation of European and American critics and art historians laid claim to the Duchamp territory, exploring in depth discrete areas of his work and thought, writing dense treatises on obscure early drawings or verbal notations, finding arcane clues to the sources of his ideas, and coming up with ever more elaborate glosses on the readymades. Teeny did her best to discourage the excesses of the Duchamp cult. Fanatics who sought her approval of their theories—that the images in the "Large Glass" were based on the signs and symbols of medieval alchemy, for example, or that everything Duchamp ever did came out of the writings of Alfred Jarry—met with firm, polite, and often amused dismissal. Teeny was not at all amused, however, by Arturo Schwarz's incest theory. Schwarz, an Italian art dealer and critic, was the author of the definitive 1969 study and catalogue raisonné of Duchamp's work (a revised and expanded edition is scheduled for publication this year), and in it he devoted considerable space to proving that the "Large Glass" and several other paintings were inspired by the artist's unconscious (and unconsummated) childhood desire for his sister Suzanne. Schwarz's relentless psychoanalyzing of Duchamp infuriated Teeny. Her husband's thinking was direct and uncomplicated, she told friends, and was far too natural to be understood by people like Schwarz, who twisted the available evidence to conform to ridiculous theses. Duchamp's attitude was that whatever people said or wrote about him was their own business. Schwarz's incest theory, he once said, was "not really about me, it's *by* Schwarz."

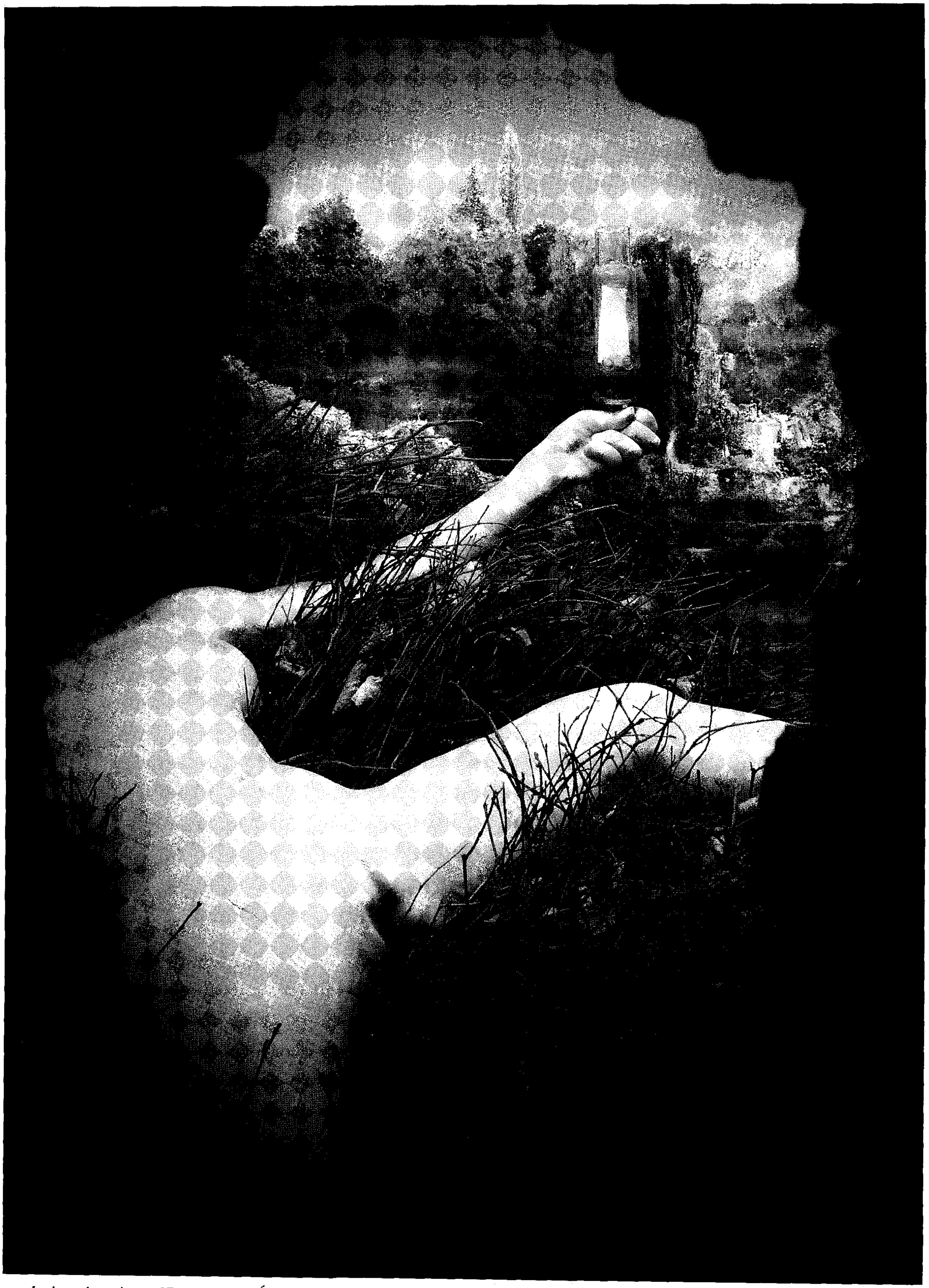
Some artists' widows have large stocks of their late husbands' work to sell, give away, or dangle provocatively in the wind. Teeny had almost none. "Étant Donnés," which Duchamp finished in 1966, was bought by a private foundation and given to the Philadelphia Museum before he died. The "Large Glass," "Nude Descending a Staircase," and most of his other important paintings were already there, donated by Walter and Louise Arensberg and by Katherine Dreier, his most dedicated patrons, and the rest were divided among the Museum of Modern Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, the Centre Pompidou, and one or two other museums. What Teeny had to distribute were mainly some "Valises" and a few other multiples—notes, replicas of readymades, and the like—whose production Duchamp had supervised in his later years. The "Valises" were a godsend to several museums, which, having little or nothing else to show by Duchamp, could put his entire œuvre on view, in reproduction. (The National Gallery, in Washington, D.C., has done this with its version.) Teeny's own collection of Duchampiana included only one major original: his early study, on glass, for an element of the "Large Glass" entitled "Nine Malic Molds": Duchamp had arranged for her to buy it from his old friend Henri-Pierre Roché, in 1956. She raised the money by selling a Rouault and a Miró from her own collection.

Teeny's principal asset was her deep knowledge of Duchamp's work. This was what drew museum directors, art historians, and especially artists to the farmhouse in Villiers-sous-Grez, with its central courtyard and walled garden and its echoes of a great, bygone era in art: a "View of Collioure" by Henri Matisse on a side wall in the sitting room; the wooden version of Brancusi's "Sophisticated Lady" on an armoire; a replica of the "Bicycle Wheel" and other readymades, looking very much at home among many books, a much used chess table, and a long, brown suède sofa in front of the raised fireplace. Tucked away on a shelf was a child's drawing of a dismounted horseman and his departing horse, done in 1896 by Marcel Duchamp, aged eight, who wrote on it in careful, schoolboy script, "Note: This picture is never to leave the hands of the Duchamp family."

Overnight visitors—this writer among them—stayed in a beautiful square guest room on the far side of the courtyard, overlooking the walled garden. There was no bathroom at this end of the house when Teeny bought it, in the early seventies, and instead of adding one she put in a minuscule toilet cabinet and got her friend and neighbor the artist François Xavier Lalanne to make her a large sculpture—a turquoise-blue hippopotamus, whose head opens up to form a washbasin and whose ample body serves as the tub. Duchamp would have loved it. In her last years, Teeny got a lot of pleasure from thinking how the things she did and saw would have amused him. They had done a lot of travelling together, and, in spite of increasing frailty, she continued to travel: to New York and Moscow; to a house, in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, that her daughter Jackie had inherited from Patricia Matisse (Pierre's second wife); to Venice for the Palazzo Grassi exhibition. A year ago last spring, she was in Rouen to attend a symposium on Duchamp. She sat through seven hours of post-structuralist artspeak, nodding off now and then but looking very stylish, as always, and also very American, in a gray flannel pants suit and a green fedora. The next day, she led a dozen ardent Duchampians on a visit to the fine old stone house where Duchamp was born, in the village of Blainville—it was still occupied by a descendant of the man who had bought it from Duchamp's father—and then she took them all to lunch at a restaurant in nearby Ry, which is the town that Flaubert used as the model for Yonville l'Abbaye in "Madame Bovary."

She had Duchamp's ineffable lightness of heart. It is a quality that his disciples often miss, and it gave her the authority she needed to preside over his immense and still expanding legacy. ♦

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART: GIFT OF THE CASSANDRA FOUNDATION



An interior view of Duchamp's "Étant Donnés." To realize his last work, he needed the solitude that Teeny helped to provide.

FICTION

THE MONTH OF DYING

BY VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ

I. MY DRUG-DEALER WIFE

WHEN I first met Angela, in Belgrade in 1990, all her friends were actually friends of Petar, a man she had been going out with and who was then in prison in Switzerland. These friends were not real criminals, just dealers, and all my Belgrade friends used their services. You could see my friends huddled together on city squares, stamping their feet, clutching the money in their pockets, waiting for one of Angela's friends to appear, "as arranged." Angela's friends, however, enjoyed the dealer's privilege of being able to saunter along nonchalantly a good half hour late or simply not to turn up. They were masters of what they offered, while my friends were its slaves.

With time, Angela could see how this business worked, and decided to try it herself. She was an innovator. She was never late, or at least not very late, and her prices were reasonable, and she soon began taking her friends' customers away. It's true that Angela fiddled with the weight a bit, but what she sold was reliably pure and good. Angela lived with her parents and brother in a three-bedroom flat in New Belgrade. She had time at her disposal, and a lot of money, earned, in a sense, honestly. Although she was engaged in a highly criminalized trade, she was still a more honest worker than I, who travelled humbly, every morning, from my apartment in Molerova Street by tram, then by bus, to my office in Banovo Brdo, where I issued dispatch notes, filled out forms, did battle with ledgers, with a feeling of entire indifference. I did what I was supposed to do while she had an entrepreneur's sense of ambition.

ANGELA and I used to meet after I'd finished work; she would treat me to lavish quantities of heroin or crack, ecstasy or coke. When I was high, I used to tell her about the women I worked with: a bunch of good-humored unmarried girls with bad hairdos and fat, maternal knees. In lazy tones, Angela would talk about her "fiancé," incarcerated some distance from Belgrade, and sentenced to be there until 1995, so it was not surprising that my fear of this shadow over our relationship persisted right up to our wedding day. What would the brute say, I wondered, as I watched Angela, jubilant in her short wedding dress the color of face powder, dancing a waltz with my father, when he finally turned up, fortified by his prison regime, furious and strong, to claim his male's sacred right to Angela? When I confided my fears to Angela, she smiled sweetly at me, ecstatic with coke and champagne. "But he's much shorter than you," she said. "You'd like him."

The day after she moved in, Angela made a truly miraculous decision: she stopped using any kind of opiate, in order to clean out her organism for pregnancy. Angela sweated, she couldn't relax, she slammed the door at the slightest provocation, she complained of backache, nausea, and pains in her joints, but she did not give in. My friends, Angela's customers, turned out to be real monsters. They didn't want to return to their previous suppliers and they besieged our apartment. But when they finally realized that they had no choice, they turned on me, insisting that I had persuaded Angela to stop taking drugs and abandon her business. Angela didn't take the slightest notice of them, or of the fact that we were now increasingly short of money. She cleansed herself for a whole year, and I'm convinced that she became pregnant the first time she let me ejaculate inside her.

II. LAZAR WASN'T JOKING, NOR WAS ANGELA

FOR a long time, Angela's brother Lazar was not a topic of conversation between us, and it was only after we married that he became one, with his decision to impose himself on our lives. He would make an appointment to visit us, always at the same time on the same day of the week, creating a kind of conditioned expectation that he would always be there, at that time, on that day. And after a few visits, if either of us suggested a different arrangement for Saturday mornings, the other would respond, "But how can we? What about Lazar?" We were afraid that he might be hurt by our absence.

Angela was particularly sensitive to Lazar's apparent fragility. "You don't know what it means to be an older sister," she said once, in a voice full of emotion, and I found that comic. But it soon turned out that I really did not know. Angela's heightened sense of responsibility dated from Lazar's birth, when she was four years old. From that early age, she had taken on a difficult task: that of being his guide on the untrodden paths of growing up. According to Angela, torn by pangs of conscience and shame, the contradictions of such a responsibility were appalling. She remembered loving him intensely, although she expressed her love through accusations and fabrications, lies and slander, contempt and scheming. Molding him freely, as if he were a lump of clay, she was rewarded for her efforts when, to everyone's consternation, Lazar suddenly left school at the age of fifteen, and, in a frenzied search for a suitable ideology, decided to subject his body to all kinds of trials. His chest was now striped with scars from the razor blades he had used to slit his skin, and his pale hands were burned from the cigarettes he had extinguished on them. But, as is often the way, someone came along and revealed a path that he could follow: Lazar became a Hare Krishna.

"But why on earth did you do all that?" I asked, staggered by her confession of her early mistreatment of Lazar. Angela looked at me as though I were a hostile animal, and burst into tears. Her tears had become frequent, and some-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

times I doubted their sincerity. But her pain could be so convincing that I would cry with her, out of solidarity. Nevertheless, I feel now that I should have dealt with her pain in some way, that I should have investigated it when, instead of the usual Saturday Lazar, with his pigtail and with books under his arm, we received a telegram in which he informed us that he had responded to his call-up papers, justifying his decision more as karma than as his personal desire. Reading the curt message several times, Angela rubbed the palm of her hand over her stomach. "It's just the heroin getting to me," she said, with a scarcely audible sigh—that was the first time she had mentioned it since we had been living together—and her hand, as she laid the folded telegram on the table, was shaking uncontrollably.

"Perhaps he's changed his mind by now?" My unconvincing suggestion, offered for the lack of anything better, redirected Angela's anger, at me. After a violent quarrel and mutual recriminations, we spent the next few days in silence, until the mild, sunny afternoons thawed us.

On one of those afternoons, we visited Angela's parents. They were polite, as always. They acted as though nothing unusual were going on. I suppose that they had the best of intentions—knowing not to test Angela's temperament—but the approach was misguided, because it was precisely their apparent indifference that infuriated Angela. I watched them both as Angela calmly broached the subject of Lazar's departure for the front, a departure that her parents had done nothing to prevent: they were tense, braced, and very apprehensive. They were careful to avoid anything that might provoke her, and, by answering her in turns, they gave each other short breathing spaces. I had observed exchanges of this kind before, and in the end one always found oneself once again in the center of that whirlpool, with Angela shrieking "You make me sick! You make me sick!" until her mother, Vida, in a vain attempt to outshout her, began talking at the same time: "What is it? What do you want? You should be ashamed of yourself!" While Angela and her mother were screaming, her father, Mihailo, turned to me: "It's no joking matter. Just down the road, two boys were arrested for avoiding military service."

Vida then made a mistake, when she admitted carelessly that she had no idea where on the front line Lazar was, adding sorrowfully, while Mihailo tried to silence her with a glance, "He promised to write!" Although Vida bit her tongue immediately, conscious of her fatal error, Angela did not miss the opportunity. In spite of her enormous stomach, she leaped to her feet; standing with her legs apart, massive as she was, she looked like an aggressive bulldog ready for a scrap.

And then for some reason we were given a considerable quantity of cookies, wrapped in foil, just as Angela was letting fly an oath and Vida was weeping bitterly over the dishes in the kitchen. Later, at the very moment of a new family schism, Mihailo took it on himself to soothe the situation, by appearing in his new slippers—showing them off proudly and drawing particular attention to the side fastening. His touching endeavor did not bear fruit. Angela was noticeably flagging and running out of inspiration, but, determined to conclude her attack with a flourish, she suddenly hurled the cookies to the ground, splitting the foil, scattering brittle pastry over the carpet, marking it with jam and ground walnuts. She dragged me into the hall, slamming the door violently as she left.

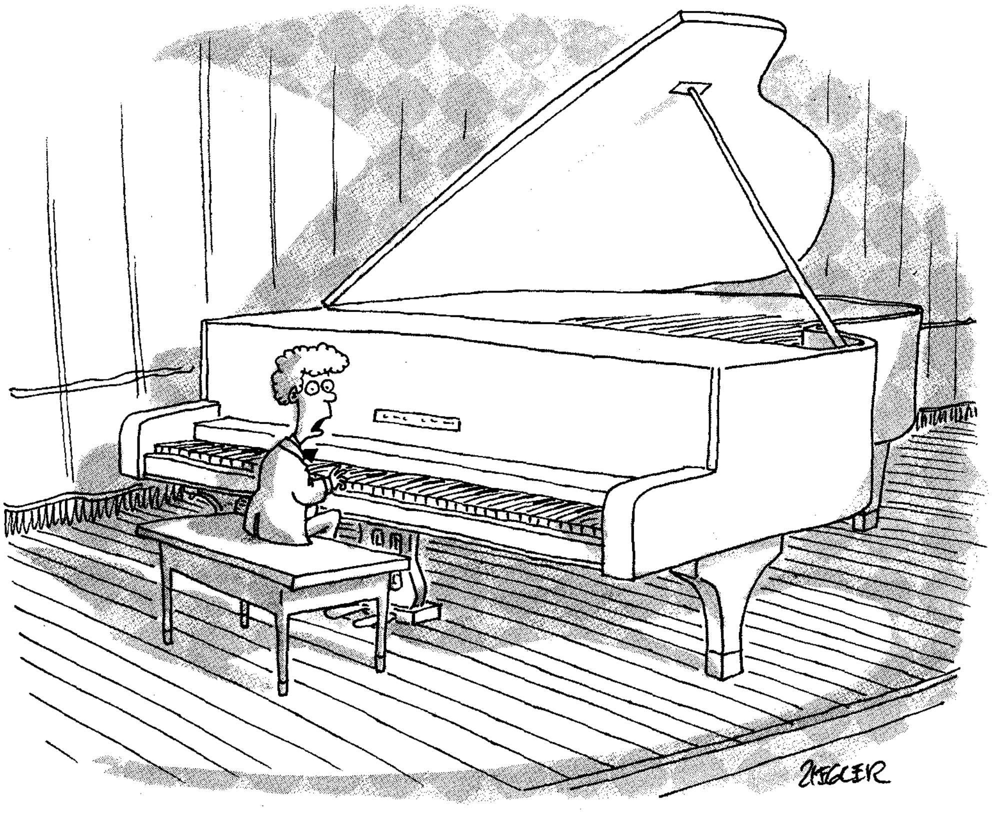
III. ON THE MONTH OF DYING (NOVEMBER 1991)

AND all that time, November was devouring its own heart. Dubrovnik, shelled and in the news in October, had been replaced by mind-blowing Vukovar vignettes. Angela wept, lying on the sofa, as she watched splinters of the devastated settlements on the Danube and Vuka, behind the rustic-featured war reporter's saccharine outpourings. Winding diagonally across our screen, columns of numb figures, dragging themselves out of their cellars after almost a hundred days under siege, smiled shyly at us, showing their broken teeth. We saw gray-haired children, and a soldier burned to the bone, the black mass still smoking hideously; we saw a young woman with half a head, refugees freezing in sports halls, the corpses of people and animals strewn through the streets of a shattered town where men were driving around in jeeps, their job done, and we shuddered with fear that, in that madness, we might catch sight of Lazar, drunk, unruly, and unshaven, like the whole crowd of our Serbian liberators.

So we turned off the television. We were incapable of dealing with such scenes. Weary of horror, suddenly aware that getting used to death would take longer and hurt more than we, in our gullibility and arrogance, had imagined, we comforted ourselves with thoughts of the New Year. We were increasingly anxious about Lazar's fate. The poverty we had sunk into was unbearable. Luckily, we had the prospect of the child to take our minds off it. But even that couldn't fully heal the wounds opened by the scenes from Vukovar. Angela began shaking her head reproachfully. Once, when she was in the kitchen and didn't know I was watching, she slapped her stomach angrily, but straight away slumped heavily in horror onto a chair, sobbing. I know that I should have stepped in at that moment, and our love would have blossomed forever, but I didn't; I crept back into the living room, on tiptoe, so that Angela wouldn't know of my chance presence. I was overwhelmed by sadness that evening as she did her maternity exercises, more zealously than usual. I came up to her from behind, knelt down, and kissed her on the neck. Suddenly, as though she were about to fall, she clung to me. She held me tight. And, it is true, an abyss gaped beneath us.

THE next day, or perhaps the day after, Angela met me with shining eyes when I came home from work—she had news of Lazar. For several days now, she had fruitlessly searched through the Belgrade barracks where conscripts were held before being allocated to the war zones. She had also gone to the Defense Ministry, but they had claimed that they knew nothing, except that Lazar had responded to his call-up papers—that satisfied all their requirements for information. Lazar's friends, or whatever they called themselves, were no more coöperative. When Angela visited them in their temple, they smiled broadly, sang "Hare Krishna," and treated her to a vegetarian lunch, which she enjoyed; but she left them knowing more about their beads than about her brother.

And then, in the bus, exhausted from her visit, no longer knowing where to turn, Angela met someone she knew, and this person told her that her friend,



"And now, God help us all, Rachmaninoff's Concerto in C Minor."

• •

or relative, or someone (Angela had forgotten that part of the story, because of the impact of what came next), had just come back from Brsadin, where he had been in the same platoon as Lazar. "So what did he say, how is Lazar?" asked Angela, breathless, her voice weak with emotion. "He's O.K.," the person she knew replied, shrugging her shoulders. "I suppose."

LAZAR was killed three days later. The news of his death reached us by telephone, through Angela's mother's choking voice. Angela vomited all day long. I was afraid for our unborn child. What were we bringing it into, I wondered, holding Angela's brow, clammy with cold sweat; what could we offer it, what could we teach it. Where was that little bit of promised brightness in our existence?

IV. HOW I FELL IN LOVE WITH DEJAN AGAIN

THE next morning, I woke weighed down by cowardice and impotence. Angela was, naturally, far worse. She began the new day, after a sleepless night, with a high temperature and colorless eyes. I showered and left for town to try to bargain for some of the medicines on the list that Angela had made for me.

I stepped out of the dusty hallway into the wet, black streets. As always, as soon as I emerged from Molerova Street onto the Bulevar Revolucije, several curses reached me from different directions. It was the beggars' canonical chant, the eternal murmur of the dissatisfied, which had always sickened me. But this morning I found myself sorry for the people in this world who had nothing left but obscenities. I felt sorry for each one of us. In the glare of a sudden vision I saw everyone running, while the ground beneath our feet broke up with a terrible cracking sound, and out of its depths came the unbearable stench of the centuries that, in our inertia, we had failed to use in a dignified way; a great, slimy, pulsating monster mocked us from in there, unconcerned about the horror that we were conjuring up as its chosen victims vanished randomly in the depths of its flesh. There were many. All those who had not managed to find a shelter, all those who had been caught unawares, they were all whisked away, like kites snatched from our hands by the November gales.

I OUGHT to have been horrified, but, like many of my fellow-citizens, I carried on along the spittle-covered streets, with the trained step of a native who walks without fear along the foot of a live volcano on the island where his tribe has survived for generations. I visited a few chemists' shops, until I found three of the seven medicines on the list. When I called Angela from a telephone box to make sure that everything was all right, I got the answering machine. I put the phone down with a sense of relief. It was a sign that Angela had somehow managed to fall asleep. Suddenly, in the mass of people around me, I detected the one-armed Dejan. "Hey!" I called, excited at the logic of the fact that I was meeting Dejan just two days after we had learned of Lazar's death. In truth, the two of them had scarcely known each other, but now they belonged to the same unregistered club. Dejan's step was so swift that his right sleeve, gaping open (and loose, because Dejan had not sewn it up, as the disabled usually do, or shoved it into one of his pockets), whipped a passerby who was unable to get out of his way. Afraid of losing him in the throng, I shouted, more loudly, "Hey, Dejan! Wait!" Then he stopped abruptly, as though cut down by a hail of bullets, and, strikingly pale, squinted toward me. He smiled with relief and waited for me to catch up with him. We shook with our left hands, pretending that we weren't doing anything unusual, and set off together for Molerova Street. Walking beside me, Dejan valiantly attempted to give the impression of a person with whom everything was absolutely well. But the image was flawed. The first indication was in the way he asked me, with such apparent casualness, "How is everyone?"—like someone who had just come back from a study trip abroad, but certainly not like Dejan.

Embarrassed, moved, I managed not to reply. Dejan looked like an animal caught in a trap. He began speaking twice as fast as before, breaking his words up nervously, rarely completing sentences, and constantly touching the rings on his middle and fourth fingers with the thumb of his remaining hand.

But, soon afterward, justice allowed me to even the score. My intention was reasonable, but who is to say that Dejan's question hadn't sounded equally splendid in his head? I wanted to put an end to this skirting round the issues. "So, how's the arm?" I asked.

What I had meant to ask was "How are things *without* the arm?" but I was embarrassed, and the question mocked me in my fear. As I stood there, frozen with discomfort, I could only stutter; Dejan coughed and replied, with a slight smile, "Nothing is the same. You see, it isn't good, but it's O.K., right. . . . I've learned not to stand crooked," and his body, of its own accord, placed itself in the habitual posture of a novice invalid. Although I seemed to myself like a surgeon whose sweat had just been wiped from his eyes by the patient he was operating on, I felt my love for my friend Dejan blossom with full intensity, in the midst of that mournful month of dying.

Dejan increased the pace of his speech, and so, barely keeping up with him, I discovered that he was making new plans: his drumming career was over, that was clear, but he would no longer be involved in music and was intending to open an agency for sexual mediation. He even invited me to be his stud for unhappy menopausal women, promising me, in passing, millions if I shaved off my sideburns, but he didn't give me a chance to respond. In a different voice, he sank into a long, disconnected lament about the fact that since he had returned to Belgrade his head had been full of a march that he had learned at the front. He maintained this irritated him more than the lack of his arm. He woke up in the middle of the night with the song on his lips, and he wouldn't know where he was—on his bed in his parents' home, or still in the dream of a man exhausted by battle, his back aching from the sharp stones under his mat while, in the chaos of an unexpected attack, shells were cracking and friends were slumping to the ground around him. Whatever he did, poor Dejan, that march kept coming back to torment him. He would sit on a No. 24 bus, just to enjoy the trip round a couple of fine Belgrade streets, and it would begin drumming in his head. He looked at the people in the streets and saw nothing but units at ease, wild companies of armed citizens, fingernails and teeth.

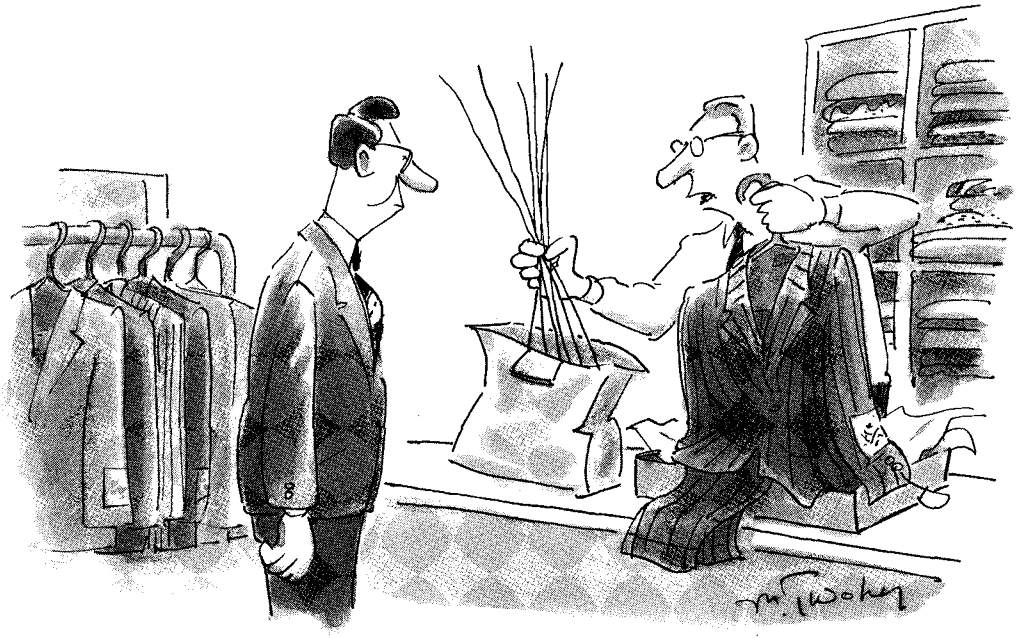
We stopped, outside the apartment in Molerova Street. Our hesitation, as we faced the certainty of our parting, was filled by the wailing of a red truck. "Do you know that Lazar is dead?" I said, through the din. "Who?" asked Dejan, frowning. "Lazar," I said. "Angela's brother." Dejan shrugged his shoulders as though he still did not understand, or didn't care. "Are you sure you won't come in for coffee?" I offered, to break the taut wire, certain that Dejan would not accept the invitation.

He smiled and shook his head. I could not resist hugging him. I was convinced that we would not talk again soon, let alone meet, and he struck me as courageous. He had no intention of giving up; he felt bad, but he balanced himself with his remaining arm, and perhaps he would find an equilibrium, even if it was through a sexual-mediation business. Dejan accepted that sudden onrush of affection with gentle submission, but I held him long enough for him to embrace me, finally, with his whole arm. And although prepared for the experience, I almost choked with tears when his stump tapped me, impotently, on the shoulder. There was a kind of harmony in that drumming, after all. It was a stump that certainly would have known what to do, if it were only given the chance to be an arm again. I cared so much about that stump just then that I would have liked to kiss it, out of pure friendship, as one kisses people's foreheads, had it not seemed so inappropriate.

V. A RELATIVE, AND MY TOTAL NOSEDIVE, FROM WHICH I WOULD EMERGE IN ONE PIECE, ENRICHED BY A UNIQUE MORAL

LAZAR'S body, with its seven bullet holes, arrived accompanied by a military escort. The pay which that body had not managed to receive was transferred to his father's account. Bent over the coffin, Mihailo wept. The young lieutenant from the escort did not know what to say, and it was clear that the situation maddened him. "You must be strong," he kept repeating, in a monotonous voice.

Despite the announcement in the papers giving the time and place of the cremation, there was neither sight nor sound of Lazar's friends. They were sitting in the temple, unconcerned about the outer world, which, unenlightened, was subject to such blows. Apart from two young soldiers, who had to be there,



"I'll throw in a few extra pinstripes."

and a distant relative of Lazar and Angela's, the shambling funeral procession was made up of middle-aged people in dark coats, several with antique noses blue with cold. I felt like an intruder, remote from Angela, who was protected by her position at the head of the procession, her black clothes, and her undeniable belly. I walked, therefore, with an uncertain step, too far from my mainstay.

In the last few years of my life, I had seen many funerals, but I had not participated in any like this. The sorrowful and comic ritual, involuntarily arranged, was entirely in keeping with my personal notion of Lazar, and, after the whole madness ended and I sank into a relaxing sleep, Lazar shone before me with the halo of a saint. Apart from the hearty slap that the priest gave a novice just as we were assembling at the cemetery, the occasion was otherwise marked by a restrained dignity until that moment when the funeral official with thick glasses (I had seen him at earlier cremations) gave the discreet sign to his invisible colleague that the coffin containing Lazar's body should now be lowered into the depths of purgatory by activating a simple hydraulic lever. Taking a ritual step backward, the official waved his hands energetically, like a traffic policeman, before he bumped into a rubber plant and toppled onto the marble floor, his behind slapping loudly against it. The distant relative, who was standing beside me, could not contain herself. She laughed, and her giggle resounded oddly in that place. The coffin then disappeared, creaking, and it seemed as though at any moment the worn-out cable would snap and the coffin would hit the ground and shatter into pieces. Overcome with panic, I had to slip outside, to get some air. As I tiptoed out, a renewed burst of giggles reached my ears, followed by the clattering of a woman's high-heeled shoes. Then I felt the heat of her glance on my back. I turned to confront the eyes that had followed me, and a clanging of little spring bells, unseemly at that time of year, tickled the tiniest hairs on the inner side of my thigh.

"I don't know what came over me," the relative said, in a soft, melodious voice. She had eyes as black as pitch, and her full, smooth lips made her romantically beautiful. She spoke very calmly, but she bore her divinity in a quite different way from Angela. Angela dwelled in her beauty with her whole being, like the owner of a magnificent garment. The relative bore hers under lock and key; she trembled with fiery shame and I trembled before her, as I might have done in the company of a film star, although she was in fact only an ordinary good-looking girl, like many others in Belgrade. Exchanging a few random sentences, we walked along the cemetery path, one of those meandering little walkways lined with crosses. We stepped slowly. Almost imperceptibly, the relative bestowed on me her warm, dry hand. Snow began to fall. The large flakes were falling on our faces, and against the panorama of the old cemetery, in accordance with the logic of an East European dream, I broke all the rules: I kissed her. She slipped her hand under my coat, and when she squeezed what she found there, I gasped with pleasure and pain. In return, I bit her ear. Her earring was deliciously cold. I want to say that I tried to enjoy the role that had been assigned to me. And it was only when I had come into the dish of the relative's palm that I noticed the pimples on her cheeks, and I was overcome with shame. I pinched and caught myself as I did up my fly. She smiled, and kissed me on the neck. "Have you got a cigarette?" she asked me, tenderly. My underpants were full of snowflakes. "No," I replied. "Have you got a handkerchief?" She smiled again, mocking me. "No," she answered. "But I'll bring one next time." I hurried to fix my clothes, while the relative, straightening her hair with her other hand, slowly wiped the palm of her right hand on the cold surface of a nearby cross.

I had never done anything of the kind before. I had never betrayed Angela, as the inadequate expression goes. As soon as I joined the little group hovering by the cemetery gate, my gaze met my wife's cold, swollen eyes. With a dignified expression, I joined her and quietly confided a great secret: "She asked me to go for a walk with her; she didn't feel well." And, who knows, maybe Angela believed me. Something, though, was threatening me from above. I felt that an invisible finger was pointing straight at me. But there was no lightning to punish me for blasphemy, for violating the holy vows of matrimony, and for the sociopathological abnegation of moral responsibility. I smiled at the absolute impotence of the Heavens: So, it's true! Everything is possible.

Victoria Roberts

"'Au contraire' to you, too."

VI. ABOUT MY MOTHER AND FATHER

In order to attend Lazar's funeral, my parents had arrived some days earlier from the village of K., in Fruska

Gora. Knowing their reluctance to alter arrangements at short notice, I took this visit as a sign of their sincere grief for Lazar.

For my father and mother the country was a source of exotic pleasures in their retirement, as it is for many people who have spent their lives in the city. I understood why they like K. My grandmother's house, where they now lived, was a masterpiece of secular architecture, shaped by the shortage (or the superfluity) of particular materials at the time (the house was built in 1947 or 1948), by the inadequate knowledge and profound nostalgia of the builders (who were German prisoners of war being held in Yugoslavia and who were, unexpectedly, deported back to Germany before their work was completed), and, above all, by my grandmother's organizational caprices. My mother decorated the house with flowers of every conceivable color, and, thanks to my father, the unfinished side of the house was now covered with a vine. There, in the hollows, sparrows built their nests, and my father was sometimes obliged to chase them away with an air gun, while they flew at rooftop level, deriding his marksman's skill.

Shortly after the German builders returned to their homeland, new workmen arrived led by a state artist in uniform, and a monument representing a warrior was erected. The names of all those from the village of K. who had fallen in the heroic struggle against the occupier and against the local traitors were emblazoned across his stomach; among them was my paternal grandfather's, although he had never fought against anyone. He had lived in the village as a teacher and he had planned to turn his talents toward beekeeping, but he was thwarted. He was shot during the war, for no apparent reason.

High above the flat head of the warrior, the sky had until recently churned up westerly or easterly clouds, undisturbed. Now, in November, it would have been possible to sit on the bench in front of the crumbling village church, whose baroque façade had been slowly decaying since 1764, and hear, all day long, the muffled thunder of gunfire from the other side of the hill.

The majority of the male population of K. had been mobilized. Those who were left (for the most part old men, the village drunks, and wastrels) enjoyed regular afternoon gatherings in the center of the village. My father had grown close to them, and as a retired high-ranking officer he enjoyed the honored status of main spokesman. Although the company generally chewed over some theme that wasn't exactly clear to anyone, my father would sometimes open the doors of his soldier-cum-high-school-teacher's past, and settle all their uncertainties with wafers of logistics and strategy, or explain the advantages of certain weapons over others. As far as real questions were concerned—such as why there were no young men in the village and who was going to work the land when the time came for it—my father would keep the answers haughtily to himself. When he finally felt that he had recited his piece, he would make his excuses and leave. I see him walking with an easy step, greeting people left and right, like the father I remember from my childhood when every day, before lunch, he would beat our neighbor at chess.

My parents had met Lazar only a couple of times, but they loved him madly, and I found that love all the more unusual in that I could never quite gauge whether they loved me, their only child, at all. Sensitive to the hierarchy that reigns among the bereaved, they were evidently determined not to stand out in any way at the funeral. However, my mother did not know how to avoid getting irritated. When my father took out a cigarette in the chapel, she had pinched him in the thigh while looking coldly in the opposite direction. He leaped aside in astonishment and pain, but he understood the message, and the incident passed unnoticed. They spent the remainder of the ceremony at the head of the procession, they talked in whispers, and their faces expressed faultless grief, and dignity.

At the funeral feast, my parents, following a strange impulse, began, with the other guests, to sing an old song about unhappy love, faded roses, and snow. And when they had finished singing, and were asked how they could bear the gunfire that they were obliged to hear night after night in the country, my mother lit her own cigarette. Only then did she turn to her interrogator, with an apologetic smile. "It's dreadful, you know," she said, "but it's a fact: you get used to everything." ♦

(Translated, from the Serbo-Croatian, by Celia Hawkesworth.)

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BOOKS

PENCE AND SENSIBILITY

The first major Adam Smith biography in a century.

BY PETER ACKROYD

WHEN he walked through the streets of Edinburgh, he proceeded in a tortuous, wormlike manner. He was often to be seen smiling and moving his lips, as if, in the words of Ian Simpson Ross, his latest biographer, "he were deep in conversation with persons unseen." He suffered from trances, which one earlier biographer described, quite inventively, as "thinker's cramp." An old market woman, watching him one day, exclaimed, "Hegh, sirs!" to which her companion added, "And he is well put on too"—which, roughly translated, means that they had never seen such a well-dressed lunatic. This is Adam Smith, who, as the author of "The Wealth of Nations," remains the intellectual force behind free-trade schemes like NAFTA, and whose theories have encouraged the tentative market economies of Russia and elsewhere.

What can be the explanation for this extraordinary man, who excited William Pitt the Younger, Ronald Reagan, and Boris Yeltsin? It is customary for great theorists and systematizers to be quite oblivious of the world around them, but Smith's case is surely unique. He was absent-minded to the point of delirium. Ross, in his exhaustive "Life of Adam Smith" (Oxford; $35), describes an occasion when Smith was discoursing upon the division of labor (one of his favorite themes) and fell into a tannery pit full of fat and lime; he had to be carried home in a sedan chair, and complained loudly all the way. There was also an incident one breakfast time when Smith picked up some bread and butter, put it in a pot, and poured hot water over it. It was, he said, the worst tea he had ever met with.

Smith's early years are suggestive. He was born in 1723, into "a fatherless world"—the senior Adam Smith, a customs official, had died some months earlier—and he was brought up by a mother whose dignified, and sometimes even starched, demeanor had everything to do with the fact that she was a descendant of the powerful Douglas clan. Smith, a weak and nervous child, depended upon his mother's care, but there was one occasion when it was notably absent. While visiting one of the lairds to whom he was related, the infant Smith was snatched by a tinker and carried away into the woods. He was soon recovered, but it may be that the shock of this adventure turned his mind inward. If so, it is possible that an early-eighteenth-century vagrant was in part responsible for the economic theories of late-twentieth-century capitalism.

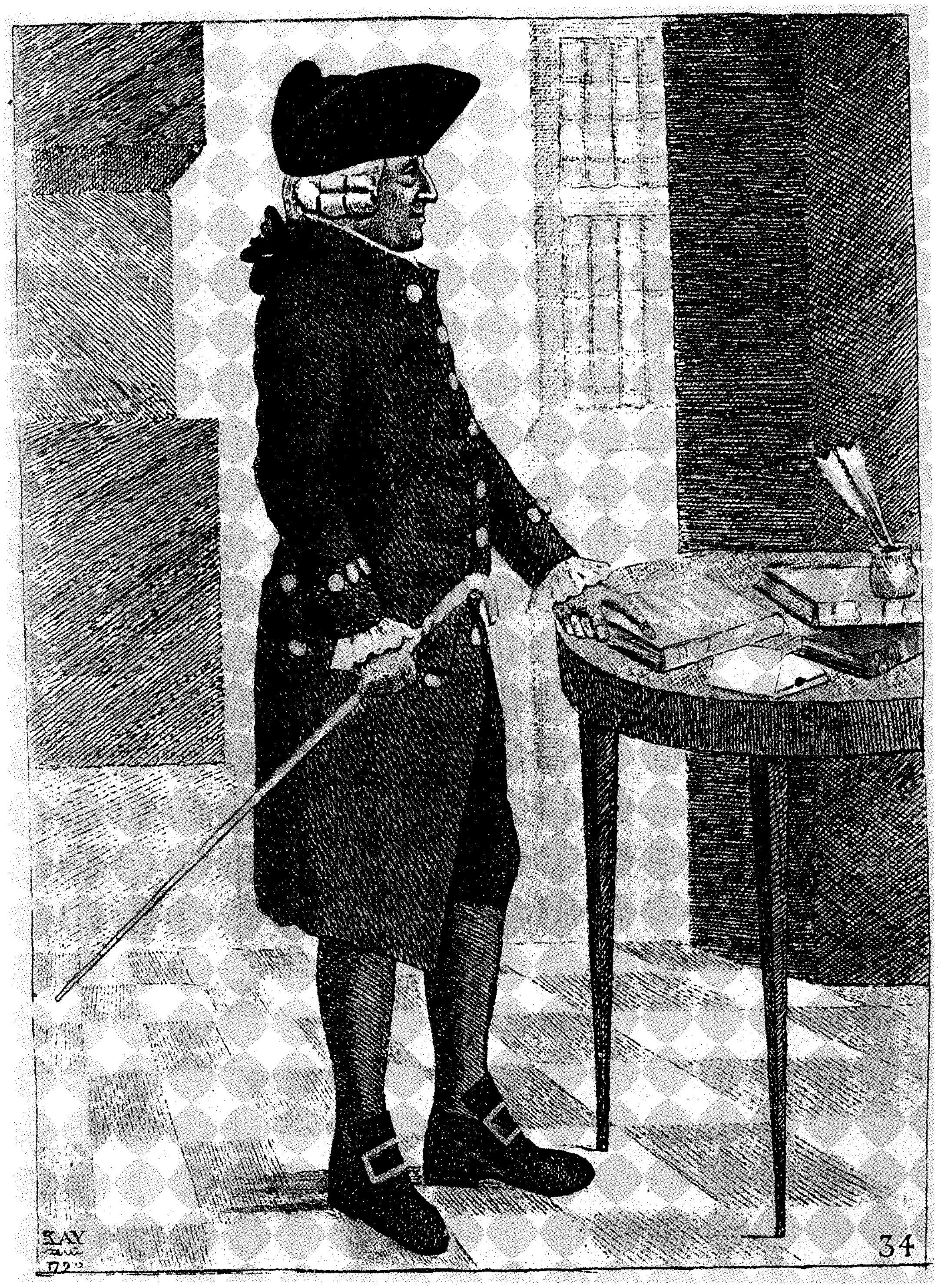
Smith and his mother lived some ten miles north of Edinburgh, in the small town of Kirkcaldy, where he received the benefit of an orthodox Scottish education. The Enlightenment of Scotland wore a Roman profile, and, according to Ross, the two schoolbooks that the little Smith is known to have possessed were "Eutropii Historiae Romanae Breviarium" and "De Historiis Philippicis"; these are the influences that perhaps account for a prose style closer to Edward Gibbon's than to David Ricardo's. But there were also lessons to be learned closer to home. Sir Walter Scott described Kirkcaldy as a "lang toun," since it spread along the banks of the Firth of Forth. Ross believes that its harbor may have provoked in the young Smith reflections on "the value of the cargoes," while walks to neighboring villages offered him "a lesson in scale of division of labour." If so, he must have been a very precocious boy indeed.

Considering Edinburgh to be nothing more than "a place of dissipation," Smith enrolled in 1737 in the College of Glasgow, and there he studied, inter alia, mathematics and natural philosophy. He also took a course in "pneumatics," which in the seventeen-thirties was still concerned more with spiritual forces than with air pumps. Smith's own spirits were no doubt warmed by the convivial society of Glaswegian scholars and lecturers: Ross paints a charming picture of one of them singing "a Latin hymn to the 'Divine Geometer' " at a college gathering.

After three years of this exotic ambience, Balliol College, Oxford, where Smith continued his studies, came as an unpleasant surprise. His colleagues there may have mocked his accent; in any event, he changed it for something closer to standard pronunciation, and he discovered that the English were better-looking than the Scots. In his methodical way, he ascribed this distinction to a diet of wheaten bread rather than oats. During his first dinner at Balliol, he fell into one of his trances, only to be roused by a steward commenting on the excellence of English food compared with its Scottish equivalent. But there the excellence ended. In "The Wealth of Nations" Smith remarked that Oxford professors had "given up altogether even the pretence of teaching." He characteristically explained this fact by the absence of competition within the university, and, indeed, the Balliol Fellows were, Ross writes, "reported to have so little to do that they spent their time sitting in Broad Street to watch the passage of the London mail coach." Nothing was to be learned at Oxford. As undergraduates some years later, both Jeremy Bentham and Gibbon left in a cloud of despair and disgust. Smith himself was reprimanded for reading David Hume's allegedly atheistic "Treatise of Human Nature," and from this period on he suffered from a variety of disorders that would later be diagnosed as symptoms of "hypochondriasis."

Smith drank tar water to relieve his ailments, and in 1746 he went home to his mother. Two years later, in Edinburgh, he began to give public lectures on the various "systems" of rhetoric and belles-lettres, and the lectures proved so successful that he was offered the Chair of Logic at Glasgow University. At Glasgow, even if Smith had never opened his mouth, he could hardly have escaped the attention of his students, who imitated what his first biographer called his "small peculiarities." Soon he was so well known that busts of him were offered for sale in the windows of Glasgow booksellers.

Eventually, Smith moved from the Chair of Logic to that of Moral Philoso-



Adam Smith: the poet of consumerism and free trade.

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phy, but it was a difference more in position than in subject. He was always concerned with the building of systems and models—with what he called the "chain" of argument and reasonings, and what Ross calls the "theory of theorizing." It is perhaps not surprising that so abstracted a person as Smith should be inclined toward abstract thought, but he became extraordinarily speculative. He believed human perception and judgment to be situated within an "imaginary machine," and created a Newtonianism of the mind which was quite as elaborate as anything in "Principia Mathematica." And yet Smith was only fulfilling his birthright: Scotland had produced subtle philosophers from the thirteenth-century theologian John Duns Scotus (from whose name the word "dunce" paradoxically derives) to David Hume and Lord Monboddo. (It was Monboddo who, following his own track of logical reasoning, concluded that human beings are born with tails.)

THE first fruit of Smith's native ingenuity is to be found in "The Theory of Moral Sentiments," published in 1759. Its argument is extensive and prolonged, but it can be summarized in three of Smith's favorite words: "sympathy," "duty," and "propriety." Smith maintained that we imagine what an "impartial spectator" would think of our behavior, and then act accordingly. The corollary of this must surely be that the more imaginative a person is, the more morally he or she will behave. Alas, the whole history of English literature teaches us otherwise. Smith's theory of human nature may not have been the most astute—one of his friends noted that his estimates of individuals were often "in a surprising degree, wide of the truth"—yet "The Theory of Moral Sentiments" was very much of its age. Smith's notion of the "impartial spectator" perfectly represents the narrative role of the novelist in the mid-eighteenth century, while his concepts of "sympathy" and "propriety" are very close to the themes of the novels themselves. Ross connects Smith's concept of the "sympathetic imagination" with Laurence Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," and makes a fascinating association of the "impartial spectator" with Robert Burns's famous poem "To a Louse":

> O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as others see us!

This is perhaps the first time that Burns has ever stood accused of being philosophical.

Smith's idea of sympathy no doubt influenced the aptly titled novel "The Man of Feeling," by his compatriot Henry Mackenzie, while the general encouragement of rivalry and competition within "The Wealth of Nations" mirrors the atmosphere of the eighteenth-century novel. In fact, that treatise has the same tone and cadence as the fiction of its period, and there are intimations of a common vision. One might say that "The Wealth of Nations" is an economic version of Henry Fielding's "Tom Jones." Smith was the poet of consumerism and free trade at a time when the state itself was increasingly turning to the industrial manufacture of goods, to specialized labor, and to commercialism.

He passed his time in the clubs and debating societies of London, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, with the likes of Hume, Benjamin Franklin, and Edmund Burke, contesting such topics as "What is the best and most equal way of hiring and contracting servants?" He was not a brilliant talker, however: in addition to his occasional trances, he had a lecturing, sometimes even a hectoring, conversational manner. His voice was harsh; he was easily embarrassed and prone to stammer. The actor David Garrick, Smith's fellow club member, called his conversation "flabby." (Ross, though, ascribes the remark to Oliver Goldsmith.) Smith did have a temper, which Ross cites as "fiery and choleric." There were times, in fact, when Smith's own "cooling-down mechanism of sympathy"—upon which he expatiated in "The Theory of Moral Sentiments"—seemed to seize up altogether. This was never more evident than in his dialogue with Samuel Johnson. Once, in a quarrel, Smith called Johnson "a son of a bitch," and another exchange led to an "unhappy altercation." They must have been like two boys fighting in the street.

Smith was rather more restrained when he was paid to tutor the young Duke of Buccleuch on a two-year tour of Europe. Smith, with his "big teeth and bad French," was not an immediate success in the salons, but there was at least one occasion when he was amorously pursued by a Parisian marquise. Nothing came of it; instead, Smith turned to the study of French taxes. Ross laments, "The biographer can do little more with the topic of Smith's sex life than contribute a footnote to the history of sublimation."

This is a rare moment of humor in "The Life of Adam Smith." There are two earlier standard British biographies, one from the late eighteenth century and the other from the late nineteenth, and both are suffused with the mild, mellifluous tones quite proper to their respective eras. (The first of them has a tendency toward anecdote not untouched by that sardonic tone reserved for late-Augustan writers.) Ross is a professor emeritus of English at the University of British Columbia, and his style reflects what Smith would undoubtedly have called the specialization of labor. While Ross's tone is perhaps better suited to the graduate student than to the general reader, he has, as a conscientious scholar, included what must be every known fact about Smith's life, not omitting details about which we could quite happily remain ignorant. But the book is a voluminous and elaborate one, and it may well serve as the last word on its subject.

ROSS is particularly detailed in his examination of "The Wealth of Nations," the book that elevated Smith to the ranks of the immortals. Smith dictated the book to an amanuensis, since he himself could wield a pen only with great difficulty; his own handwriting remained clumsy, large, and almost childish. He walked up and down his study in Kirkcaldy as he dictated, stopping occasionally to rub his head vigorously against the wall above the chimneypiece. He was in his forties, still abstracted, and was once seen during this period walking several miles to a village in his dressing gown. He spent three years revising the text in London, where it was published at the same time, 1776, and by the same publisher as Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Smith was not as great a literary success as Gibbon, but he immediately became influential among people concerned with affairs of state. After dining with Pitt the Younger, Smith said that the Prime Minister "understands my ideas better than I do myself." Others were not quite so impressed: a Scottish neighbor remarked that "it was strange a man who wrote so well on exchange and barter was obliged to get a friend to buy his horse corn for him."

"The Wealth of Nations" was considered to provide a great fund of original and provocative ideas on the nature of "oeconomy"—a word that was still used primarily to deal with household expenditure. The book begins with a dissertation on the manufacture of the simple pin and ends with a contemplation of the nature of the American colonies, with chapters in between on such themes as the profits of stock, the accumulation of capital, and the mercantile system. Again, "system" becomes a word of great significance for Smith: he outlines the idea of the market as a wonderfully elaborate mechanism—based originally, no doubt, upon a Newtonian model. It was Smith's way to create systems, and then to hypothesize about them to the most extreme point. Nevertheless, it has become only too easy to misrepresent him, and to suggest that he was somehow the defender of that aggressive laissez-faire capitalism which has been so marked a feature of the last two centuries. Though he did declare that "it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest," he always insisted that the pursuit of self-interest should be carried on within the context of the necessary laws of justice and of the individual's natural benevolence toward others.

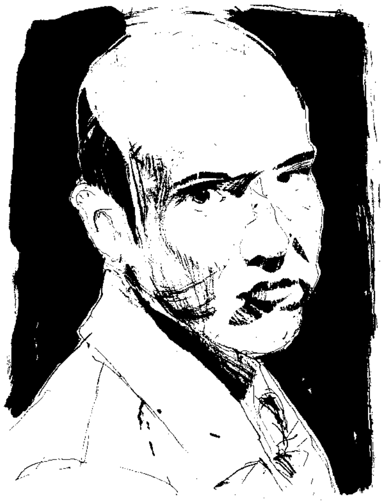
"The Wealth of Nations" went through five editions in Smith's lifetime, but he had no idea that it would be his last book. He believed that he still had great works before him, including volumes on philosophy, poetry, eloquence, government, and law. But in 1778 he surprised his friends, and posterity, by taking the post of Commissioner of Customs in Scotland. It was perhaps an odd position for an exponent of free trade, but he enjoyed the consolations of a settled position in Edinburgh, in a post similar to that once held by his father. He had his books, his walks, and, most important, his elderly mother. He wrote certain essays on literary subjects which led William Wordsworth to conclude that he was "the worst critic, David Hume excepted, that Scotland has produced." The Romantic poet may well have taken umbrage at such sentiments of Smith's as "It is the duty of a poet to write like a gentleman."

Smith did die like a gentleman. The death of his mother, at the age of ninety, in 1784, quite unmanned him. She was "a person who certainly loved me more than any other person ever did or ever will love me," Smith told his publisher. He himself died six years later, of "chronic obstruction" of the bowels. At a last dinner with his friends, he told them, "I believe that we must adjourn this meeting to some other place." He was sixty-seven years old and no doubt expired still believing in system and harmony. In his last days, he said, "I meant to have done more." But he did enough. This strange, fitful man from Kirkcaldy became, without knowing it, the prophet of modern capitalism. ♦

DOUBLE LIVES

Be nice to the novelist in your family.

BY CRAIG SELIGMAN



Dale Peck

RICCARDO VECCHIO

DALE PECK has such a quiet voice that at first there doesn't appear to be much extraordinary about "The Law of Enclosures" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23), except, perhaps, for the quality of the prose, and even the prose is so unobtrusively graceful that it may take you a while to notice how beautiful it is. The subject matter—a marriage, in its first and its final years—would qualify as humdrum if Peck hadn't made his splashy début as the author of the AIDS novel "Martin and John" a couple of years ago. (He starts this novel, his second, with a creepy joke on his readers' expectations. The first thing Beatrice learns about her future husband, Henry, is "He's gay. He has AIDS. He—he's dying." In fact he's straight, he has a brain tumor, not AIDS, and he isn't dying, although he thinks he is.) In ten chapters that alternate in charting the beginning and the end of their life together, each told partly from Henry's and partly from Beatrice's point of view, Peck shows their love corrode and then, long after they have given up on it, rekindle. The structure is the X of two intersecting vectors, one plunging toward hopelessness, the other ascending toward love and death.

But the midsection of the X—by far the greater part of Henry and Beatrice's forty-odd years together—is missing, and in its place Peck has installed five autobiographical chapters devoted to his own family: his mother (who died when he was three), his three stepmothers, and his father. As artificial as this triptych sounds, it bends so tractably to the novelist's purposes that after a few chapters it feels natural, like a sonnet whose rhymes you notice only when you see them on the page. (Peck does include one self-consciously showy turn, though: he sets everything—the beginning of the marriage, and the end—in the early nineties. Henry and

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Beatrice are young lovers in the same years that Hank and Bea are senescent mortal enemies; their marriage passes in a perpetual present.)

The author's technical sophistication, his age (under thirty), and his sexuality (he has assumed a prominent place in the gay literary community) make "The Law of Enclosures" an even greater feat of virtuosity than its virtuoso predecessor. He is as piercing on old age as on youth, as comfortable writing about women's bodies as about men's. And there's a lot about bodies here—dozens, maybe hundreds, of passages; bodies are the enclosures of the title. "I can come no closer to you than your body," the writer tells the reader. "Everything else I will never touch. Everything important is hidden from me." The novel demonstrates this: despite the precision of the writing and the massive accumulation of details about Henry and Beatrice, the more we know about them the less we know. Their story has a strong existentialist you're-born-alone, you-die-alone flavor, yet the effect isn't stark—the light the characters move in is filtered through a veil of words, a haze of gray-toned beauty.

PECK has a strong predilection for this depressed, Shostakovich-like palette; maybe it has something to do with his having been brought up in Kansas. That isn't to say that he doesn't have a flair for the histrionic gesture (like entitling the autobiographical second section of the novel "Lamentations") or a gift for grotesque lyricism (which is the style of "Lamentations"), or that he doesn't occasionally betray his age ("If we lived every day knowing, I mean really knowing, that we were gonna die, would we still do all the stupid shit we do?"). But this subdued, rather sour novel, which continually glances off despair, isn't what you'd ordinarily expect from a young writer. Neither is the cool recognition, which informs so much of it, that hurting others is a human pleasure. Peck walks a tricky line between forgiveness and indictment, and nobody could say which side he comes down on; he's too fine a novelist to have an agenda. Although practically all the parents in the book—Henry and Beatrice, and Henry's and Beatrice's parents, and the author's father and three stepmothers—come off badly, Peck never accuses any of them of parental malice. They're just flops. He isn't holding up glowing examples of heroism next to them; he isn't interested in heroism. I don't think he believes in it.

No doubt that's one reason he refuses to play down the ugliness of his own family history and his feelings about it. Though the fragments of his background that Peck puts on display in the "Lamentations" section are proof that it's a curse to have a writer in the family, they're probably no worse than what most of us carry around. What is seriously transgressive (and sometimes a little sickening) in them is Peck's embarrassed but obstinate frankness about his own feelings—above all, the ambivalence of a gay intellectual toward his blue-collar father: a confused mixture of fear, respect, anger, bitterness, a little contempt, and, undeniably, love. "You have never left a woman unsatisfied," he writes, addressing him. "You have never lost a fight. You have never faced a plumbing problem you couldn't fix. In your own way, or at least on your own turf, you are invincible. Certainly I would never challenge you; believe me when I tell you I'm not challenging you now." Whatever Peck may claim, though, this public tale-telling *is* a challenge, to his father and to the rest of his family, and if he doesn't come right out and apologize for what he's attempting he certainly *worries* about it. In his defense, he offers a parable. He is a farmer who finds the corpse of his mother in a field. He pulverizes it and uses it for fertilizer, and he feeds his children with the crops. When his children learn the truth, they refuse to eat any more, but he makes them. "I didn't kill her, I tell them. I didn't put her in that field. I only found her there. I only did what I had to do."

Writers of fiction have to rely on the resources that turn up in their own fields, and if that dependency leads them to the verge of cannibalism they nevertheless write with the conviction—or, at least, the hope—that something good is going to grow out of it. By dropping an undisguised memoir into the middle of his novel, Peck points up this process and takes it one stage further: he gives us the novel *and* its source material. And with that double offering he reminds us that novelists, whatever their families have to put up with, are blessed, because, unlike the rest of us, they can put their rotten memories to use. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

MORALITY PLAY, by Barry Unsworth (Talese/Doubleday; $22.50). In this suspenseful novel, set in fourteenth-century England, a band of travelling players comes upon a village where a young boy has been strangled and the weaver's daughter is sentenced to hang for the crime. The players decide to "play the murder" (a departure from their Biblical repertoire), and—unwittingly, at first—they threaten the feudal hierarchies governing their world. As one player, a fallen priest, warns, "If we make our own meanings, God will oblige us to answer our own questions."

MAZEL, by Rebecca Goldstein (Viking; $23.95). Sasha (née Sorel Sonnenberg), a former star of the Bilbul Art Theatre, brought forth a daughter, Chloe, a professor of classics at Columbia, who brought forth Phoebe, who studies the mathematics of soap bubbles. Although the novel ends where it begins—at Phoebe's improbable wedding in a nineties shtetl in suburban New Jersey—along the way the author creates one transitory world after another, each shimmering with humor and intelligence.

HOPE, HUMAN AND WILD: TRUE STORIES OF LIVING LIGHTLY ON THE EARTH, by Bill McKibben (Little, Brown; $22.95). Here the author reports on two communities—Curitiba, a city in Brazil, and Kerala, a state in India—that combine ecological thrift and social justice, and he investigates the recent history of these inspiring examples to find out how they came into existence in countries plagued with poverty and corruption. The book frames its exotic journeys with tales of reforestation, wildlife conservation, and small-scale farming in the United States, where popular involvement in environmental restoration also plays a pivotal role.

INTIMATE WORLDS: LIFE INSIDE THE FAMILY, by Maggie Scarf (Random House; $25). A radiant and compelling examination of four families and a wide breadth of psychological literature shows how families work—and, more often, don't work—for all the individuals within them. There are no bad guys, which can be disappointing if you're identifying madly (and you will), but the book ends with a family so loving that it makes you want to forgive everyone.

INTIMACY AND TERROR: SOVIET DIARIES OF THE 1930S, edited by Véronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen; translated from the Russian by Carol A. Flath (New Press; $27.50). A collection of ten diaries from the time of Stalin's Great Terror, whose writers include supporters of the dictator as well as victims. The editors, proclaiming a "distrust of 'historical objectivity,'" attempt to give the selections equal weight. But no amount of moral relativism can redeem the self-regarding vacuity of Galina Vladimirovna Shtange, with her fulsome accounts of "Stalin, whom I love so dearly"; nor can it dim the courage of Lyubov Vasilievna Shaporina, who takes in her neighbor's daughters when the neighbor is hauled off to prison for "being the wife of an enemy of the people." In the end, the profane pieties of the Stalinists simply accentuate the virtues of those individuals honest enough to recognize evil and brave enough to face it.

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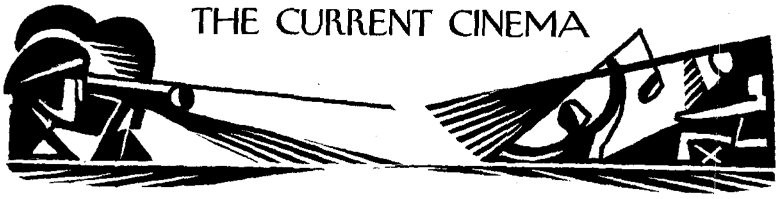


THE CURRENT CINEMA

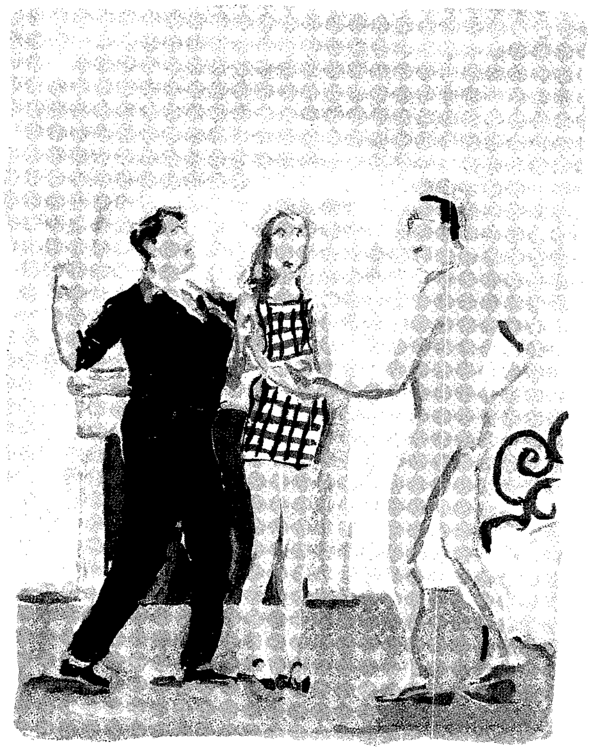
WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

A lovers' trio in "French Twist" and a women's quartet in "Waiting to Exhale."

BY ANTHONY LANE

MOVED by the passing, late last month, of Dean Martin, I sat down, poured myself a drink, and thought about bad behavior. Martin's trick was to appear drunk even when he was not, and to look even when he *was* drunk as if he were only pretending to be drunk and were fully in command of the situation—as, of course, he was, even though drunk. It makes your head spin to try to unravel the niceties of such an act, which relied on Martin's own head's staying remarkably steady. What mattered more than Dean Martin's needs and failings was the fact that to the viewer's eye he was never wound up by them. While the young Brando was peeling his own soul like an orange, men such as Martin and Crosby could cruise through a picture as if it were merely a nice place to hang out. In "Bells Are Ringing," Martin, in the role of a playwright, even sang at his *typewriter*—a heroically relaxed image of the creative soul.

There is almost nobody in today's movies who can match that relaxation—who knows how to maintain a devil-may-care approach without losing sight of the devil. But I did feel the spirit of Dean Martin tapping me on the shoulder and pointing as Victoria Abril wandered naked across the screen in "French Twist." Her nude scenes are the most endearing since Annette Bening's in "The Grifters," for the simple reason that neither Abril nor the audience seems to notice that she hasn't got any clothes on. The film is set in the South of France, and clothes just get in the way, but there's more to it than fine weather: to exist au naturel becomes less a physical statement than a comic attitude, and what is really unfettered about Abril is not her body but the grin that tops it off, along with the amazingly dirty laugh that becomes its signature tune. When her character, Loli, is offered a joint—her first in years—she accepts it with the grave warning (and the hope) that she will not be held responsible for her actions. "Watch out, I might pull my panties over my head," she says.



Sex farceurs: Josiane Balasko, Victoria Abril, and Alain Chabat in "French Twist."

JEAN PHILIPPE DELHOMME

Loli is the loving wife of Laurent (Alain Chabat). He is a no-good, philandering real-estate agent, if that isn't a tautology; when she welcomes him home with a hug, he glances over her shoulder

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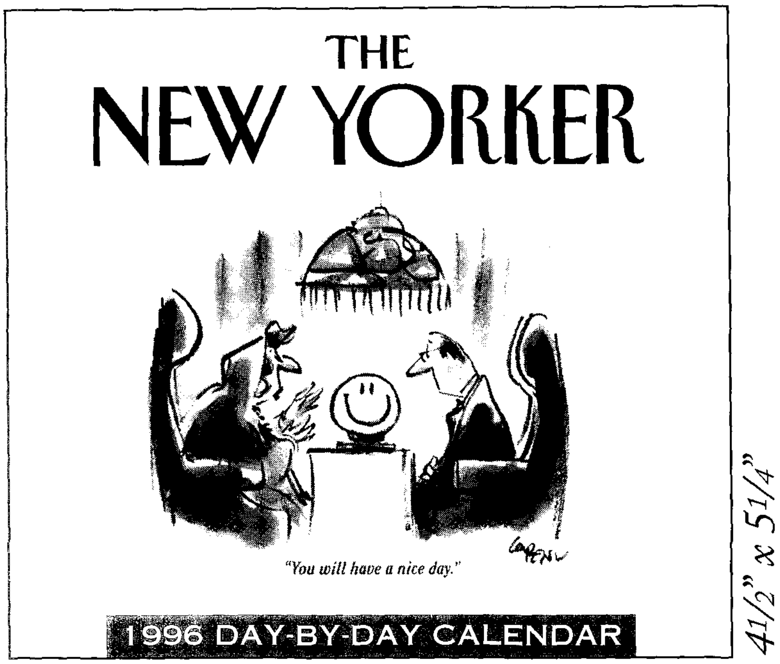
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at his watch, as Jane Fonda did with one of her clients in "Klute." Loli, on the other hand, despite the air of high-grade wickedness that hangs about her, has been until now a loyal wife and mother. Then, one day, her child announces, "There's a man at the door," and her life begins to spin. The man is in fact a woman: a jovial, bullish lesbian of no fixed address named Marijo (Josiane Balasko), who fixes Loli's plumbing, stays for supper, and, before the night is out, winds up caressing her in the garden. Loli strolls back into the bedroom with a liquid, supersated look in her eyes, as if she were made of warm wax. Without knowing it, she is getting her own back at her husband; the film is rapidly thickening into one huge casserole of hormones, with all manner of fatty lusts stirred into the pot.

Not content with butching it out as Marijo, Josiane Balasko also wrote and directed "French Twist." Viewers may recall her as the frumpy lover of Gérard Depardieu in Bertrand Blier's "Trop Belle pour Toi." Some of Blier's shamelessness has stuck to Balasko: her tenderly perverse triangle of characters is indebted to "Going Places" and "Ménage," and she obeys all the demands of erotic geometry while ignoring those of good taste. (No film that starts with a disco remix of "A Whiter Shade of Pale" is heading for the high ground.) Her work is more sunlit than Blier's, though, and less skeptical; it counts as a respectable example of that otherwise mangy species the sex comedy. The very words summon up leering English farces from the seventies, in which window cleaners perched ladders up against bathroom windows, but Balasko operates on the more sophisticated principle that sex itself is a comedy. In the movie's first scene, Laurent, who is sitting in a café with one of his pickups, is approached by a flower seller and offered a rose for the lady. "No, thanks, we've already fucked," he says. The line is so virulently antiromantic—so crisp and cruel in its view of fusty cinematic habits—that you jump back in your seat as if stung. A whole movie like this would make you break out in a rash. But there's something to follow: the scene is capped with an epilogue, in which Laurent goes after the flower seller and buys an armful of roses. The graces of courtship are rubbished, then restored.

The sequence works beautifully, but it also hints at the sort of compromise that will soften the second half of the film. Once

POSTSCRIPT

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY

More than a decade ago, when he was in his early nineties, Nicolas Slonimsky used to delight in pointing out that if Mozart had lived to be that age, he could have been Chopin's friend and the mentor of the young Wagner. As Slonimsky approached his hundredth birthday, in April, 1994, he took to upping the ante. "Had Schubert lived to be as old as me," he'd note mildly, "he could have been *my* nanny."

Poor Schubert would have had his hands full. Slonimsky, who died this past Christmas Day, well into his hundred-and-second year, was a towering figure, both in the history of music and in the history of music history. A musical prodigy, born in St. Petersburg ("When I was six years old," his 1988 autobiography begins, "my mother told me I was a genius"—full stop; paragraph break. "This revelation came as no surprise to me"), he went on to achieve a worm's-eye view of the Russian Revolution. He became the pianist for the band of the very regiment, the Czar's own, whose half-baked mutiny in February of 1917 precipitated the monarch's abdication ("We'd had *no idea!*"). Having fled the ensuing civil war, Slonimsky eventually surfaced in Boston, where he served as principal assistant and "piano-pounder" to Serge Koussevitzky while, on the side, becoming a champion of the avant-garde. It was Slonimsky who conducted the première of Edgard Varèse's fiendishly difficult "Ionisation" and also of many principal works of Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, and others. Indeed, his insistence on programming such fare to the exclusion of almost everything else led to the calamitous breakup of his conducting career.

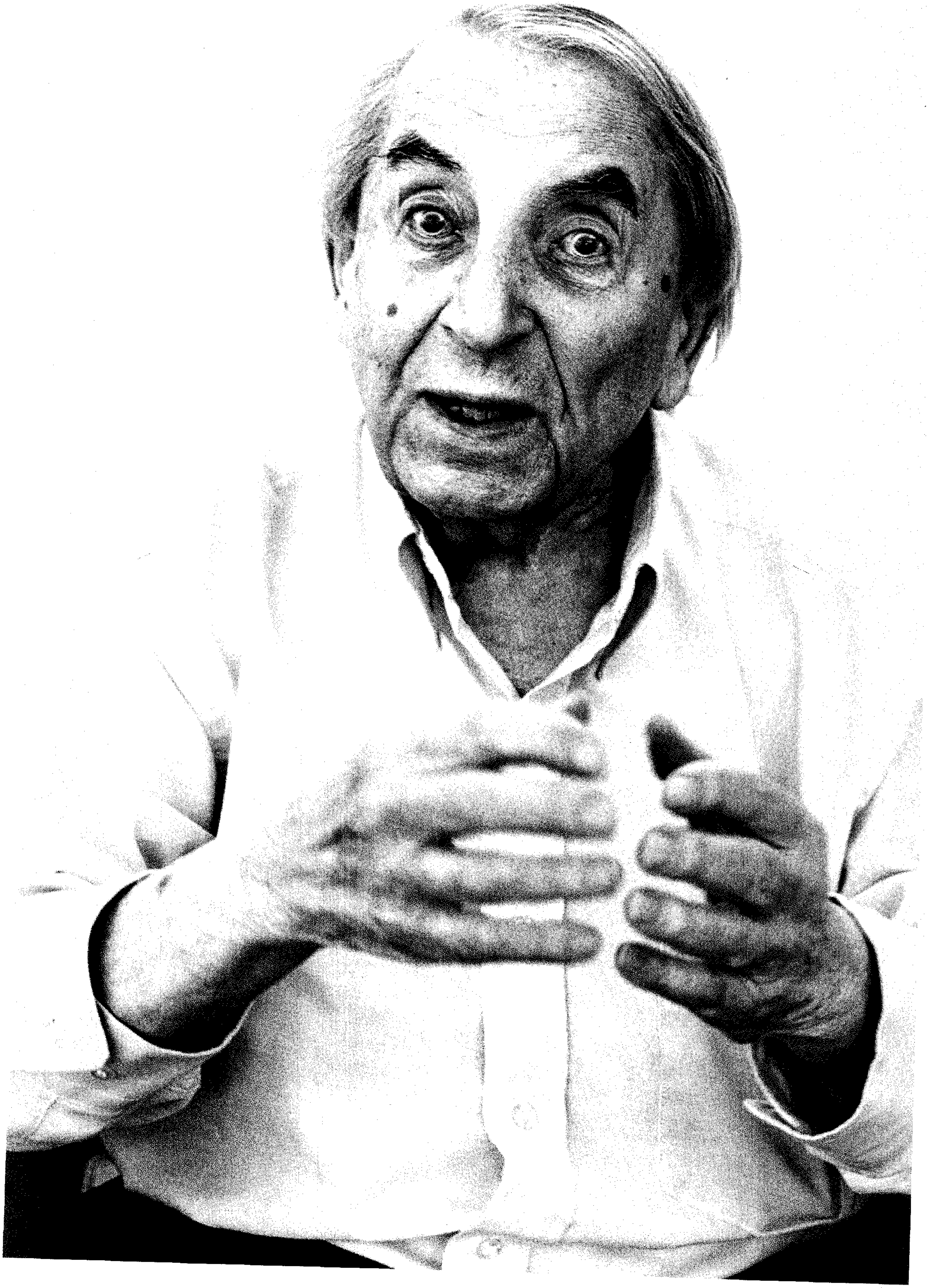
Then, in his fifties, he launched himself on a new vocation, systematically becoming the world's foremost musical lexicographer through his editorship of tomes like "Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians" (certainly the most slyly stylish such single-volume reference work in the world), the "Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns" (much beloved of jazz musicians), and the "Lexicon of Musical Invective" (complete with alphabetized "Invecticon," in which such phrases as "etiolated and emasculated shreds of sound," "eunuch," "evil art," "eviscerated product," "excrement," and "excruciating agony" are neatly indexed to the now celebrated composers about whose works they were once uttered).

In his nineties, Slonimsky compiled seven books. At a hundred, he released a new edition of "Music Since 1900," his astonishing day-by-day, date-by-date chronicle of the century. And though, at long last, he began to slow down, he could still play the piano with his hands behind his back (you name the tune). He could still keep entirely separate beats with his arms (a talent that came in handy when he was guiding orchestras through the likes of Ives but also tended to give him the aspect of a peculiarly berserk semaphore messenger). Entertaining visitors at his home, in West Los Angeles, he was, almost to the end, as spry and wry and self-denigrating as ever. He had wanted to call that 1988 autobiography "Failed Wunderkind," but his publishers wouldn't let him. "You see," he'd declaim, "I'm a failure even at failure!"

Slonimsky outlived virtually all his contemporaries and, sadly, many of his juniors, including his dear friend and admirer Frank Zappa. Zappa once featured Slonimsky as a performer at a Mothers of Invention concert, introducing him as "our national treasure"; the crowd went wild. Zappa told me about the first time he invited Slonimsky to his house: the Master played Zappa's Bösendorfer, "and nobody has ever played that piano as loud as that man—and not jumping up and down like a madman, just from the strength of his arms and his spirit." He was "a human dynamo, with a fantastic brain and a body made out of molybdenum." Another thing Zappa really liked about him was his clothes: "That first evening, when he was standing there, his clothes didn't match, but they were obviously cool, and you just knew that this was one of the Real Guys." —LAWRENCE WESCHLER

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Nicolas Slonimsky, Los Angeles, January 11, 1995.



the courting is over, Marijo moves in with her beloved, sharing her with the disgruntled Laurent; Loli sleeps with each of them three nights a week. ("On the seventh day we rest," she says.) The comedy of domestic patterns, however unorthodox, is duller than the rude intrusions that first threw the household into chaos; it's no surprise that the film begins to nestle against the bourgeois habits that it once yearned to strip bare. Loli has a couple of implausible teary scenes in which she confesses to her guilt and her love for Laurent (I felt like weeping for poor Victoria Abril); the farce grows broad and bloated, with bicycles tipping into pig muck; and there's even an aging whore, who dispenses the wisdom of the heart to a pensive Laurent. Give me a break.

At its best, "French Twist" offers a blithe, randy, quick-witted demonstration of the fact that the heart is stupendously unwise; that it runs on a rush of blood and suffuses people with cravings that come out of nowhere. Balasko ends up handing us a bunch of roses, as it were, by telling us that we discover our true natures in bed. But she began with the sight of people losing themselves in lust. I know which version I believe. Everybody, as Dean Martin assured us, loves somebody sometime.

"WAITING TO EXHALE" is now available in three exciting flavors. First, there is Terry McMillan's 1993 novel, which manages to be both sassy and rambling, like a hiker in Manolo Blahniks. Then, there is the current hit film adaptation, directed by Forest Whitaker. Last, there is the movie's soundtrack album, produced by Kenneth (Babyface) Edmonds. Of the three products, I'd say that the album is the best. The worst, by a mile, is the movie.

Given its title, the movie could easily be a documentary on the college days of Bill Clinton. In fact, "Waiting to Exhale" is a semi-plotted melodrama that winds its way through the lives of four black women living in Phoenix, Arizona. There is Savannah, who in the opening pages of the book sings along to a Whitney Houston number while she puts on her makeup, and who is therefore played in the movie by Whitney Houston. Lucky she wasn't listening to Rod Stewart. Next comes Bernadine, whose husband leaves her stranded and desperate: "She was starving for *real* affection, for *real* tenderness, and Bernadine needed a *real* man to give it to her" is how the novel puts it. Bernadine is played by the *real* Angela Bassett. There are also Gloria (Loretta Devine), who runs a beauty parlor, and Robin (Lela Rochon), who runs a string of unsuitable boyfriends, or what she prefers to call "pretty boys with big sticks." The movie's evident wish to fly the flag of sisterhood and solidarity is, I feel, slightly marred by an attitude toward sexual relations that would bring a fetching blush to the cheek of Joe Eszterhas.

What links the four women, apart from the eternal bond of friendship, is a round-the-clock desire to find the right guy. "None of us, not none of us, have a man," says Savannah as they all gather round to toast Gloria on her birthday. Whether that lack lends them substance as independent feminists or whether it should be the cause of wild lament, the film can never decide; there's nothing wrong with mixed feelings, of course, but unless they're handled with care they can look like schizophrenia. Forest Whitaker, making his début behind the camera, appears to treat directing as a chance to take a vacation from all the strength and restraint that he learned to deploy as an actor; there are sequences here that make no sense whatsoever. When Robin invites Michael, a slob from the office, back to her place, the encounter is played for laughs: we are asked to sneer at male technique, or at the want of it, as Michael hoists his paunch onto Robin, shunts back and forth, and cries, "Papa's coming!" Fair enough, if about as subtle as a kick in the teeth, but then, all of a sudden, the tempo slows, the music rises, the laugh stops dead, and Robin is off on some riff about her deepest dreams. "I want everything," she tells Michael. "I want to eat out two or three times a week." She asks him what he wants. "I think I found it," he replies. They kiss. Papa's loving it.

There is no director in the world—not even Godard on a good day—who could turn a scene around that fast. "Waiting to Exhale" lurches from sentimental smooches to hollering excess without pausing to consider what ordinary human conduct is like. The only pretense of continuity comes from the hot, peppery light that covers most of the action, but Whitaker doesn't trust the mood to carry his characters through a dramatic setup; he likes to identify his chosen high points and advertise them with closeups. When Gregory Hines appears as Gloria's new neighbor, a shot of his mouth informs us that he will at some point be required for kissing duty; narrowed eyes, on the other hand, mean that Angela Bassett is about to go up the wall, which in her case is a fairly short trip. Some of the performances aren't bad—Whitney Houston calms the camera down with her dreamy, just-waked-up look, and Wesley Snipes puts in a solid (and uncredited) appearance as one of the movie's many errant husbands—but the film has no basic rhythm they can hook up to. It is, in short, hardly a film at all; it is more of an album manqué, or a music video stretched out to such excruciating length that you can hear the bones crack. When you check out the soundtrack of "Waiting to Exhale," and you hear Whitney Houston giving way to Toni Braxton, or a plaintive Aretha Franklin number bumping into an unforgivably catchy track by Brandy, you get off on precisely the kind of tonal shifts that are so embarrassing in the movie. It is the business of the lyrics to gush and exhort, because we know that the next song, or even the upcoming chorus, can be relied on to stop the flow; on the screen, every expression of feeling lingers just too long. As Savannah is enfolded by a hunk named Lionel on the dance floor, she breathes a quick voice-over to the Lord. "Thank you, Jesus," she says, and we all giggle.

To be accurate, half of us giggle. I saw "Waiting to Exhale" in a full theatre, and there was no doubt that a sizable chunk of the audience was having a terrific time. Around me, people were melting with every embrace. When Angela Bassett set fire to her husband's extensive wardrobe, they whooped for joy. Their pleasure was full-throated and sincere, and it threw me. I am used to reading movies wrong, but with this one I felt for the first time that I was speaking another language altogether. What I saw as dumb visual grammar and blatant emotional rhetoric was part of someone else's lingua franca. If the divide were purely racial—if the movie were fencing off different areas of sensibility for whites and blacks, with each side baffled by the other's reaction—then we would have something to worry about. But the disagreement is rather more entertaining than that: a lot of women, black and white, seem to love this picture, and a lot of men are sitting there with their legs crossed. "Waiting to Exhale" takes a big stick to pretty boys, and maybe they deserve it. ♦

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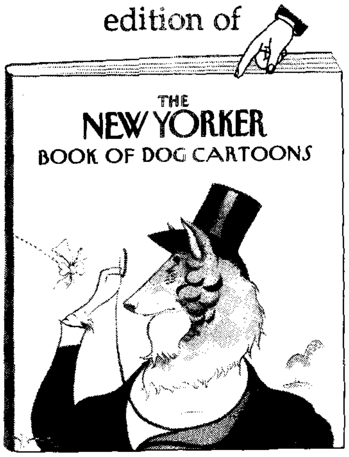

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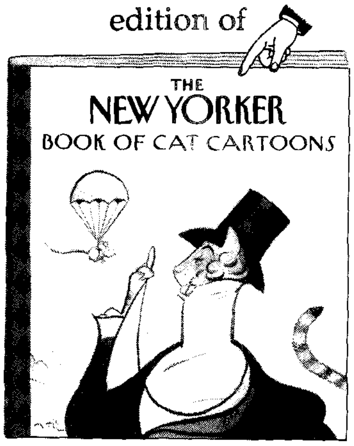

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THE THEATRE

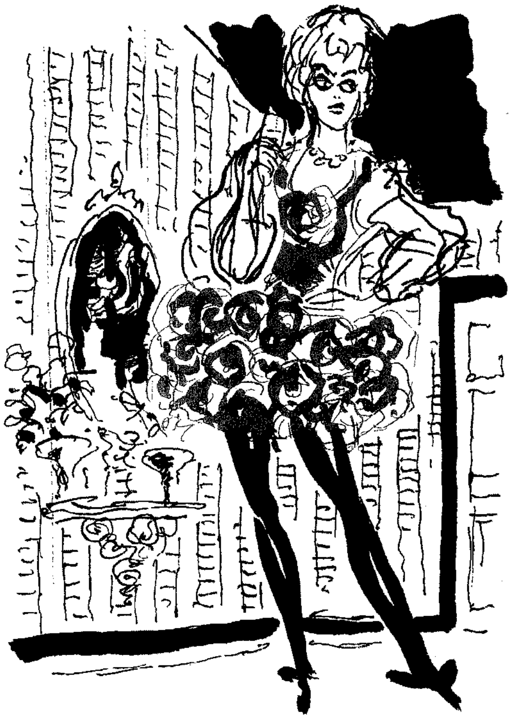
FACE VALUE

A sexy London production of "The Way of the World."

BY JOHN LAHR

GREAT comedy is cruel, and therefore is written by the young. William Congreve was only thirty in 1700, when he wrote his masterpiece, "The Way of the World," but he was already the king of English high comedy. The play, however, fell victim to a backlash against Restoration libertine high jinks, which had prevailed for forty years as a radical reaction to the Puritans' banning of theatre between 1642 and 1660. Although by no means licentious, "The Way of the World" was too fierce, too witty, and too elegant for what Congreve called "that general Taste which seems now to be predominant in the Palates of our Audience." Laughter lives and dies by fashion: once the theatregoing public began to change, so, inevitably, did the comedy it paid to see. Vice and cynicism were on their way out; the sentiment and moralizing wit of London's emerging middle classes were on their way in. Congreve, a patrician university wit educated at Trinity College, Dublin, learned the hard bourgeois lesson of the marketplace—form follows money. "Men may be convinced, but they cannot be pleased, against their will," Dr. Johnson wrote, in "Lives of the Poets," of Congreve's churlish audience. The cool reception to "The Way of the World" disgusted Congreve. He folded his tent and never wrote another play.

"The language is everywhere that of men of honor, but their actions are those of knaves," Voltaire said of Congreve's characters. The tension between decorum and desire is the hilarious drama of the play (and the subtext of ritualized upper-class English life). Congreve sees manners as a game—a kind of hunt for both fortune and feeling—and a game played best when it's for keeps. "The Way of the World" begins with an image of competition: two men pushing away from a card game. In Phyllida Lloyd's lively production at London's Royal National Theatre (in repertory through March 9th), though, the game has been changed, for no apparent reason, to an unchallenging backgammon match. Mirabell, the true wit (Roger Allam), is too preoccupied to concentrate, yet he tells Fainall (Richard McCabe), his opponent, "I'll play on to entertain you." Fainall, however, has an appetite for vindictive triumph; he likes games when they are tense. "The coldness of a losing gamester lessens the pleasure of the winner," he says, refusing Mirabell's polite offer. "I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill fortune than I'd make love to a woman who un-



Geraldine McEwan as Lady Wishfort: a demented parody of fashion.

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dervalued the loss of her reputation." In this closed world of aristocratic privilege and tangled emotional alliances, the thrill of intrigue is the antidote to boredom. Dissimulation is everything; how you play the game reveals character. "Had you dissembled better, things might have continued in the state of nature," Fainall tells Mirabell, who has been delivering "sham addresses" to the foolish and filthy-rich matron Lady Wishfort (Geraldine McEwan) in order to disguise his love for her niece, Millamant (Fiona Shaw). Mirabell replies, "I did as much as man could, with any reasonable conscience." Fainall is cold and calculating, with the instincts of a killer; Mirabell is generous and charming, but cunning.

Both men are playing for higher stakes than the audience at first understands. Mirabell wants to marry Millamant. "I like her with all her faults, nay, like her for her faults," he tells Fainall, showing the big heart that informs his brand of wit. Standing between Mirabell and his goal is Lady Wishfort, who now hates Mirabell for having pretended to love her; Mirabell has hatched a fantastic blackmail plot designed to pry Millamant out of the clutches of her aunt. For all Mirabell's ardor, Congreve puts the extraordinary sum of twelve thousand pounds on the young woman's attractive head, and the size of her inheritance helps to explain not only Mirabell's ingenious tenacity but also Millamant's nature, which is unusually independent. (Since a family's estate was generally settled only on the first son, the issue of inheritance and wealth was of riveting importance to Congreve's fashionable audience. At the time, the annual incomes of London aristocrats averaged twenty-eight hundred pounds for lords, eight hundred and eighty for baronets, six hundred and fifty for knights, and two hundred and eighty for gentlemen.)

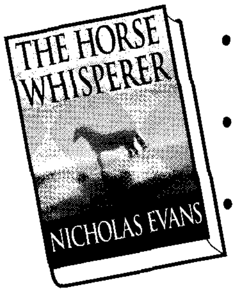
Fainall, for his part, is married, but he hates his wife, who is the daughter of Lady Wishfort. Mrs. Fainall (Veronica Quilligan), in turn, hates her husband "most transcendently." Fainall wants to turn Mirabell's plot to his advantage by causing Lady Wishfort to disinherit Millamant for marrying without her approval, thus insuring that the surplus in Lady Wishfort's bequest will be transferred to Mrs. Fainall. Fainall tells his mistress, Mrs. Marwood (Sian Thomas), that once his wife gets the money, "I'll part with her, rob her of all she's worth." The plot's clever maneuvering, backbiting, wheedling, and innuendo depend on a legal nicety: Fainall can't get at Mrs. Fainall's money, because it's held in trust by—who else?—Mirabell, to whom, as the dramatis personae says, Mrs. Fainall was "formerly friend." It takes five acts and miles of fabric to arrive at a surprise ending whose clout is more intellectual than dramatic. But Congreve succeeds in dissecting the nature of manners: a fiction of civility that masks the fact of rapacity. In the play's game of hide-and-seek, the Restoration clash between the private and the public self, the struggle of the uninhibited heart to free itself from a life lived under wraps, is powerfully dramatized.

PHYLLIDA LLOYD, who has a sharp sense of style and of comedy, wants to liberate the play from its status as a musty museum piece, and she tries—wrongly, I think—to achieve immediacy by abandoning much of the period detail. She has changed some of the play's locales—from a chocolate house to a men's club, and from a park to an art gallery—but mainly, in collaboration with the designer Anthony Ward, she has changed the costumes. This has the curious effect of raising the level of fun while lowering the comic stakes of the play. Restoration costume, with its ludicrous corsets, heavy dresses, powdered wigs, and high-heeled shoes, embodies the era's constricting carapace of artificiality. The clothes are a landscape of unfreedom which the play's characters always carry with them and which inspires Restoration comedy's passion for liberation. In the Royal National Theatre production, however, Lloyd and Ward forgo the period look for something more mobile, jokey, and modern. The men are decked out in foppish quasi-Edwardian town suits, whose cut and color vary according to the degree of their oafishness, and most of the women are dressed in a brazen style that might be called Restoration Showgirl—tight bodices, and short skirts that show off the actresses' tapered legs to sexy effect, and from which a train of fabric folds open like labia in the front and falls gracefully behind them. (Millamant's outfit is an exception to the floor-show conceit: she wears pants, in keeping with her free spirit and liberated views.) The costumes broadcast chutzpah and sexual bravado, not modesty and refinement. Here—at least, in visual terms—wit has no mission, because the surface of life has no mystery. The dangerous contradiction between appearance and reality, which is Congreve's concern, does not exist; and wit's purpose, which is to engineer survival by teasing out the authentic from the inauthentic, is vitiated by Ward's flashy design. So, while Lloyd's production gets laughs, it misses some of the point.

But Lloyd and Ward's scenic cartoon and Congreve's comedy come into synch in the person of the clownish Lady Wishfort. Geraldine McEwan, in a great performance, turns her into a kind of Clarabell of coquetry. When we first meet Lady Wishfort, she is sitting in peignoir and whiteface on a preposterous nouveau-riche black-and-white cowskin chaise longue. "Paint, paint, paint!" is her cry; she doesn't have an authentic bone in her body, and her only modes of being are affectation and desperation. As Congreve conceives her, Lady Wishfort is a demented parody of fashion. "I have a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums," Lady Wishfort says, unable to master grammar or manners. The reason she has no manners is that she has no awareness of others. Decorum requires a sense of decency; Lady Wishfort can't even speak civilly to her servant, and rudely berates her as "puppet," "idiot," and "fool." Her amorality is as sensational as her vulgarity. "What's integrity to an opportunity?" she opines, memorably. True wit, embodied here in Millamant and Mirabell, is shown as a playful social emollient that honors the integrity of others while negotiating a truce with reality. At its worst, as in Lady Wishfort, wit is only a decoration that multiplies the emptiness of a lost soul. Her speech and her behavior are as loopy and shallow as her personality. McEwan's exhilaration in making a mockery of Lady Wishfort's "affected bloom" is infectious. Her gravelly voice is comic gold: it swoops through Congreve's dialogue and coaxes satire out of every elongated vowel. "I'll receive Sir Rowland here," she says to her maid, and as she awaits this would-be suitor, who is really a setup, she skips and swans romantically around the stage. "Is he handsome? Don't answer me. I won't know. I'll be surprised. I'll be taken by surprise." But a few minutes later it's the audience that is taken by surprise, when Lady Wishfort reappears to greet her false suitor. "How do I look?" she says, standing, knock-kneed, in a blond wig and a miniskirt of artificial roses. She looks for all the world like a combination of a topiary hedge and Big Bird.

Among the actors portraying the various male half-wits, Julian Rhind-Tutt, as Witwoud, is sidesplittingly funny. With frizzy red hair cut in a Malcolm McLaren pompadour, Rhind-Tutt gives Witwoud a vivid and startling angularity, flitting like a grasshopper around the stage as the character inflates with the notion of his own sharpness. "I confess I do blaze today," he says. "I am too bright." Witwoud, as his name implies, understands the need for manners and the use of wit as a defense, but he lacks the necessary tact or taste—a deficiency that is evident in his affection for his boorish sidekick Petulant. "Smoke the boots," he says to the blockhead, egging Petulant on into a battle of wits for which he is unarmed.

Wit's goal is to achieve harmony gracefully. When Mirabell and Millamant charmingly hammer out their conditions of marriage, Congreve contrives a brilliant display of wit in action; it is one of English drama's great love scenes. Here Millamant, whom Fiona Shaw plays with a strong, sharply intelligent, bantering humor, sounds a call to equality as she sets out the requirements for her to "dwindle into a wife": "Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate, to be sole empress of my tea table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave." The lovers reach agreement, and, ultimately, wit brings even Lady Wishfort into the circle. In a neatly managed finale, a dance takes place outside Lady Wishfort's London town house. As Lady Wishfort, in her cups, is passed from hand to hand in the reel, she staggers and spins like a female Mr. Pastry. At the play's last beat, Mirabell and Millamant embrace inside the house, and the dizzy Lady Wishfort collapses onto a heap of garbage bags outside. The image of waste is Lloyd's addition: a gesture to her feminism, not to Congreve's cynicism. For a rich woman of late middle age to be left on the rubbish heap is not the way of the world. In our day, as in Congreve's, where there's a purse there's a partner. ♦



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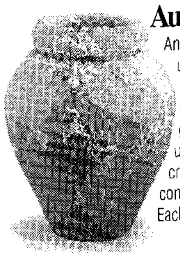

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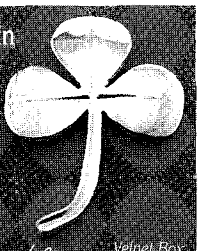

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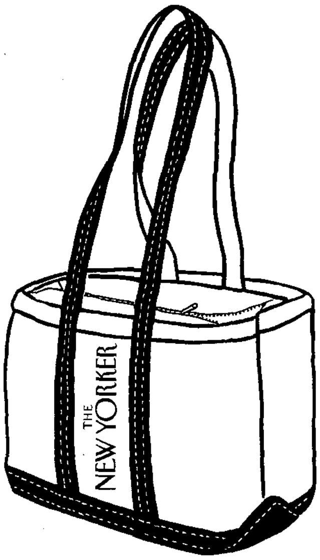

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MUSICAL EVENTS

MAGNIFICENT PROBLEMS

New productions of Schoenberg's challenging works for the stage.

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

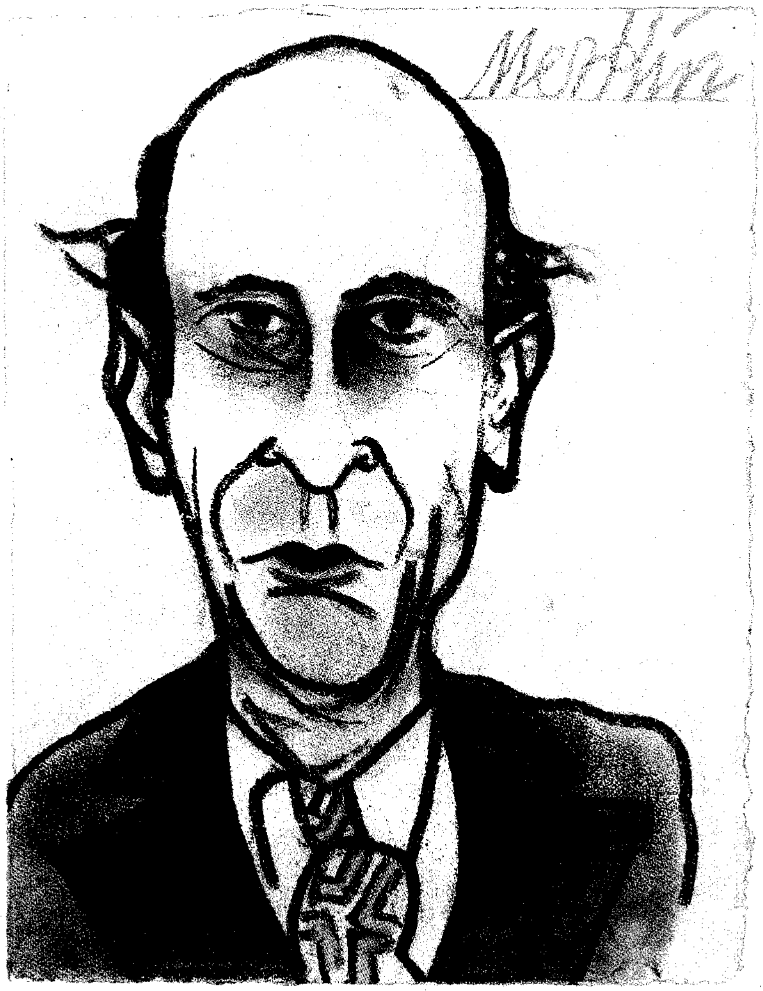
THE two grandest European festivals, Salzburg and Edinburgh, will be featuring Schoenberg this year, in stage productions that were recently tried out in the Low Countries. "Moses und Aron," due for Salzburg, opened in Amsterdam, at the Netherlands Opera, with a gathering of big names: Pierre Boulez conducting, Peter Stein directing, Chris Merritt as Aron, Karl-Ernst Herrmann designing. The Edinburgh evening, which started out in Brussels, is a portmanteau occasion that moves without a break from "Erwartung" through the "Accompaniment to a Movie Scene" (with movie) to a danced "Verklärte Nacht," and it, too, boasts important talents: Anja Silja as the protagonist of "Erwartung," Klaus Michael Grüber directing it, Antonio Pappano conducting the whole program. Combined with other evidence from the last few years—such as the City Opera "Moses," and the Met "Erwartung," with Jessye Norman—these ventures hearteningly suggest that Schoenberg's theatre works are beginning to be relished for the very reason that they were so long neglected: they challenge the habits of opera houses and place on performers the onus to exceed.

"Moses und Aron" may be Wagnerian in its leitmotifs and in its prevalent types of situation—moral debate between two characters, and choral spectacle—but Moses' mistrust of imagery is taken into the work as the opera's mistrust of its form, and even of itself. Schoenberg probably recognized that his first solution, to compose the piece as an oratorio, was too neat: better to accept the theatrical nature of his material and question it. In the role of Aron (the spelling that Schoenberg preferred, in order to avoid having an unlucky thirteen letters in his title) he required a big tenor—the kind of voice that's used to expressing an opera's central passions and purposes, Otello's or Siegmund's, but whose mellifluousness is here opposed by the nature of the vocal line, as well as by the drama, in which ingratiating charm is the character's only quality, and a damning one. We seem to be invited to put more faith in Moses, who speaks principally of God, in absolutes ("Single, eternal, omnipresent, invisible," as the opera begins), and whose utterances, in pitched speech, act to castigate the genre in which they appear. So the brothers are enabled and hampered in equal measure. Aron is a natural operatic being, but he's in the wrong opera; Moses isn't an operatic being at all, but he needs opera as the vehicle of his dissent. The work ends with Aron's success, as the people of Israel march off guided by images: the pillars of fire and cloud. But what matters much more to us, in the great final scene, is Moses' failure.

Schoenberg dismissed the idea that "Moses und Aron" was the dramatization of his own dilemmas: those of an artist who, like Moses, has ideas and, like Aron, must make them public, or of one whose big new idea—the twelve-tone principle—had to be promulgated with the means of the old musical language and to audiences familiar with that language. Indeed, it might be truer to see, in reverse, his creative life as strengthened and disciplined by the example of the Moses-Aron story, whose importance to him is attested not only by the opera but also by a play he wrote shortly before, "Der Biblische Weg" (1926-27). In the play, which concerns a modern exodus of Jews from Europe and the United States to a new state, the leader, Max Aruns, is killed by protesters among his own people. However, his Zionist project will survive, under a Joshua-like figure who arrives to take command, and to Schoenberg this was what counted. Through human tragedies—the disappointment of a Moses, the self-hollowing of an Aron, the pride of a Max Aruns—the good idea would unfold as of itself, needing those tragedies, and able to survive them.

For this triumph in "Moses und Aron" to be seen, heard, and felt, though, there must be some arching unity in the production, and this the new version so far lacks. Mr. Boulez's sense of the score is brave and beautiful, but not so special in sonority as it was when he recorded it, in 1974, and less inclined to rapid-fire regular rhythm. His distaste for twelve-tone Schoenberg used to express itself in an insistent fury; now he's learned acceptance, which sounds less interesting. Acceptance does leave more room than fury for the choir to project itself, and the choral contribution in Amsterdam was outstandingly clamorous and luminous, thoroughly prepared, and splendidly sustained. The two main roles were also well taken. Mr. Merritt showed immense strength in throwing his voice through the switchbacks of Aron's line, and so using power to the ends of weakness and lack of support. David Pittman-Jennings' Moses was, unusually but aptly, an ordinary man forced to do the extraordinary: not a commanding figure but a stubborn one. Among the bit parts, those of the Young Man, in the first act, and the Naked Youth, in the second, were given the right wild adolescent intransigence by John Graham-Hall.

That Mr. Graham-Hall and his companions should all be really naked in the orgy was one of the production's profitless literalisms: naked people onstage (unless the music is very different from Schoenberg's) look vulnerable, like children, not erotic. Nor did we need four straining horses for the arrival of the Ephraimite, or a poor bullock to be threatened by knives in the Dance of the Butchers. Mr. Stein and Mr. Herrmann also funked the magic: their pillars of fire and cloud were flying galvanized chimneys. And this was symptomatic of the production's prosaic response: in the scene where Moses and Aron, approaching the Israelites, should appear to keep overtaking one another, the use of the revolves looked like a faithful rendering of the stage directions, not like something happening. Even the one strong visual effect—a burning bush with real flames—was spoiled by being labelled with the tetragrammaton, as if the image were not enough. Possibly, this is a production in progress. The massing of the chorus onstage, like the massing of the voices, was often effective, and a start had been made in showing Moses and Aron locked in fraternal struggle: they might make more use of the jagged angle of stage that juts out over the pit—part of a floor whose stark geometry was unnecessarily outlined with yellow and white strip lights.



Arnold Schoenberg: opera as a vehicle of dissent.

"Erwartung" is another magnificent problem. It takes up an archetypal operatic phenomenon, the soprano aria, and exacts the high standards only a leading company could attain, but it counters all routines of the opera house, having no plot, no supporting cast, no room for extravagance other than extravagance of expression, and no obvious companion piece. At the Théâtre de la Monnaie, in Brussels, the answers to these various challenges were enterprising, even thrilling. Mr. Pappano, the theatre's American chief conductor, unfolded a consistently sweeping, surging, searching account of the score. As the unnamed protagonist, Ms. Silja proved the continuing force of that harsh, white, steady flare she can bring to her voice: the sound of an emotional wound. The confession of fear, doubt, love, and jealousy spilled out of her without her accord, hammered or drawn out of her by the orchestra, and that impression of involuntariness was intensified by the bold, bald stare with which she confronted the audience.

Mr. Grüber's production had her as an old woman, shuffling forward on slow traverses of the stage with the help of a stick. Perhaps this singing victim was blind. The only décor consisted of one slumped tree trunk and a transparent screen of abstracted autumnal woodland, with the singer at first behind this, then in front, and, finally, after the curtain had descended, alone on the proscenium. Perhaps we were being introduced to her blindness by this disappearance of the visual world. On the other hand, the growing concentration on the narrating woman gave her—bowed yet still singing—the poignant, exhilarating presence of a Beckett heroine.

From "Erwartung" the program moved to another forest nightscape of despair, love, and hope, written a decade earlier: "Verklärte Nacht." Mr. Pappano and his orchestra were again outstanding. Right from the start, where the trudging weight invested in simple repetitions of a low D was astonishing, the musical performance had authority, drive, and passion. The elegant choreography, by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, for six couples and two extra girls as children, was capable of sudden gusts of emotion—in, for example, the simultaneous turns of the six men, who'd been standing with their backs to us since the piece began. The six couples were really only one, whose movements and feelings rippled out through more than two bodies: when, at the climax, there were just two bodies onstage, the result was a luminous and moving love duet, with a hint of rehearsing the loss and separation to come in "Erwartung." ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

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BY BRUCE McCALL

To: Covert Nomination Planning
 Committee
From: Action Group
Re: Operation Lazarus

Let's briefly review everybody's input pro & con one last time and decide go or no-go, pronto. Surprise is vital, but we all know Washington's a security sieve.

PROS

- He's hot, hot, hot. Ollie Stone turns out to be best advance man he ever had. Let's catch the wave, gentlemen!

- Late start no problem. Recognition factor (99.4%, Roper; 98.9%, Gallup) tops Eisenhower's in '52.

- Backfire danger nil. Frankly, he's in no position to reject a draft.

- Research shows rehabilitation momentum still there.

- Politically & personally untouchable. "Bad taste" onus all on the other guy. (Besides Pat B., who'd dare attack?)

- Natural underdog role = huge sympathy vote.

- Been there, done that: White House experience factor clobbers Dole, Gramm, all others.

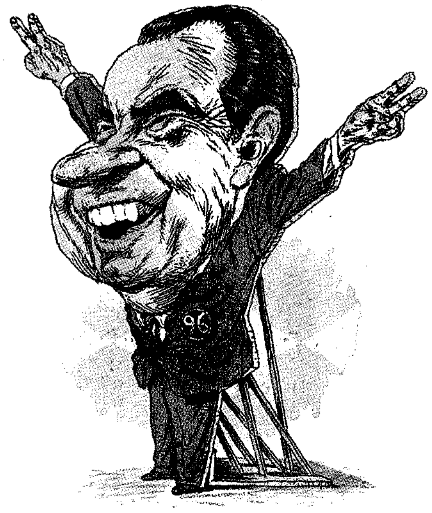
- Automatic 100% elderly support. Huge vote bloc!

- Can claim high ground 1st time ever—"not in it for the pension," etc.

- "Third term" brouhaha a nonissue: never finished 2nd term. A technicality, sure, but what's a conservative Supreme Court for?

- No political baggage on deficit, Bosnia, or gays in military. Teflon City. Only nondivisive candidate.

- Big foreign-policy plusses—e.g., Henry K. sez Chinese very superstitious on hereafter issues (Honorable Ancestors *invented* there). Could scare them into caving on human rights.



- No Air Force One trips, no Secret Service coverage—*cheapest* Administration ever. Neutralizes Jesse H.

- Early Newt feelers very positive. (Maybe *too* positive. Turns out he's a cryogenics nut. Needs a keeper! Volunteers?)

CONS

- Religious right could leverage tight Heaven links to claim a "pipeline" and hijack him to support Robertson. All the more urgency to nail down Rev. Graham as Veep. (Chuck Colson as go-between?)

- Dole will be hopping mad. Dole *always* hopping mad.

- Chronic credibility issue exacerbated—"just another of his tricks," etc. Tricia statement key here. (Who'll approach?)

- Very limited photo ops. Hopkins' people say $12,000 an hour as stand-in fee, but jiffy mall surveys say "Hannibal Lecter" so we've said no thanks. Life-size cardboard photo cutout? With his body language, who'd notice? Let's test. Research staff: Is Checkers stuffed? Pls. confirm/deny A.S.A.P.

T.B.D.

- White House to San Clemente, or San Clemente to White House? Get Constitutional-scholar day rates.

- Who'll handle Henry K.? David Eisenhower already asking why he faxed résumé.

- Flood N.H., Iowa, etc. with free videocassettes before primaries? See if Stone & Hollywood Pictures open to cost sharing or at least deep discount.

- Ehrlichman redux? Just floating it, guys. Does know where the bodies are buried. Continuity factor has to be A-plus. Anybody know what he's up to? Check.

- Campaign slogan? Suggestion: only top four into focus groups. To refresh:
  1. "At His Best When Things Look Worst."
  2. "Never, Ever Count Him Out."
  3. "They Said He Was Dead Before."
  4. "Tanned, Refreshed, Rested." ◆

JOHN CUNEO

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